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# Human Nature According to Saint Thomas Aquinas

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HUMAN NATURE ACCORDING TO SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

BY

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	iii
I. MATERIAL BEINGS . . . . .	1
II. SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCES . . . . .	25
III. THE NATURE OF MAN . . . . .	42
IV. CONCLUSION . . . . .	81
V. REFERENCES . . . . .	84
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	85

## INTRODUCTION

In the teachings of St. Thomas, philosophy is not a salve to theology. He demonstrates by the principles of reason, many propositions forming a doctrine separate from theology, strictly speaking.

He teaches a philosophy distinct from theology; the former, solving problems by the natural resources of the human mind; the latter, seeking its proofs in divine revelation. Both can happen to meet on the ground of the same truths, but each conserves its physiognomy, its means of research, and of argumentation. There is a system of important truths that reason can, by itself, by its own power, discover and demonstrate. For example, the existence and the perfection of God, also, the spirituality and the immortality of the human soul, its free will, the rational bases and natural rules of morality, and all the attitudes which prepare, accompany or follow those data, acquired by the work of the intellect. The important point is to establish the crucial role of faith in revelation, and the one of philosophical knowledge, about the same object; for example, the existence of God. If it can be proved by philosophy alone, that God exists, why do we need a revelation imposing upon us the belief in that dogma? It seems we would have to choose between science and faith. St. Thomas solves the difficulty very clearly.

If faith is not absolutely necessary in order to adhere to the truths that reason can demonstrate by itself, it is evident, nevertheless, that for many men, faith is relatively necessary, or very useful, in order to assure

the assent of their intelligence to those important propositions.<sup>1</sup>

The study of philosophy is very long and hard. Very few minds are capable of the effort, and among those who would like to undertake that study, very many have not the leisure, or the patience or the perseverance to do it. Faith comes to the aid of that weakness--it teaches more rapidly, it enlightens more minds, it prepares the masses, it puts humanity in possession of the most sublime truths.

The more obscure philosophy is, the more it is subject to error and the more it exposes one to doubt, to hesitation, uncertainty. Faith, resting on revelation, has more assurance, firmness and guaranty, against false arguments. It puts the soul in a confident tranquility.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, Literally Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, Ltd., London, 1938, 3rd edition, I, q. 2, art. 1; ad. 1: To know that God exists in a general and confused way is implanted in us by nature, inasmuch as God is Man's beatitude. For man naturally desires happiness, and what is naturally desired by man must be naturally known to him. This, however, is not to know absolutely that God exists; just as to know that someone is approaching is not the same as to know that Peter is approaching, even though it is Peter who is approaching; for many there are who imagine that man's perfect good which is happiness, consists in riches, and others in pleasures, and others in something else.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., q. 1, art. 2: Sacred doctrine is a science. We must bear in mind that there are two kinds of sciences. There are some which proceed from a principle known by the natural light of the intelligence, such as arithmetic and geometry and the like. There are some which proceed from principles known by the light of a higher science: thus the science of perspective proceeds from principles established by arithmetic. So it is that sacred doctrine is a science, because it proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed. Hence, just as the musician accepts on authority the principles taught him by the mathematician, so sacred science is established on principles revealed by God.

Such is the fundamental cause of the coexistence of a same domain, of a philosophy simply rational, and of a theology constructed on data revealed supernaturally. But for the elect of intellects, that domain remains none the less the proper ground of philosophy. Philosophy has the right and the duty to cultivate it, in its own manner, according to the method belonging to it, and with its own instruments.<sup>3</sup>

But then it would seem contradictory to have at the same time on one given subject, faith and natural knowledge. Indeed, faith supposes the will to believe a truth revealed by God, but not directly demonstrated by reason. It is divine authority and not the evidence of the object proposed to the mind, which imposes the belief, while it is the luminous evidence of the object, which by means of the scientific proof, impels conviction in philosophy. That does not mean that man is not brought to faith by reasons of believing, but those reasons are decisive only because they establish that God has revealed, and not because they prove the dogma.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., q. 1, art. 1, ad. 2: Sciences are differentiated according to the various means through which knowledge is obtained. For the astronomer and the physicist both may prove the same conclusion--that the earth, for instance, is round: the astronomer by means of mathematics (i. e., abstracting from matter), but the physicist by means of matter itself. Hence there is no reason why those things which may be learnt from philosophical science, so far as they can be known by natural reason, may not also be taught us by another science so far as they fall within revelation. Hence theology included in sacred doctrine differs in kind from that theology which is part of philosophy.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, II, q. 2, art. 1, ad. 1: Faith has not that research of natural reason which demonstrates which is believed, but a research into those things whereby a man is induced to believe, for instance, that such things have been uttered by God and confirmed by miracles.

In philosophy, on the contrary, authority is not a sufficient foundation--a clearness coming from the thing itself, is necessary.

Therefore, a man cannot, by a simultaneous act, believe and know (in the strict sense), the same doctrine.<sup>5</sup> If he believes it, it is because he has not actually the knowledge--understanding of it; if he knows it, it is because, he has not on that point the actual faith by the submission of the mind to divine authority.<sup>6</sup> Of course, St. Thomas, though faithful, would not believe if he did not see that it is necessary to believe, or on account of the evidence of the signs, or for some other reason of the same order. But to see what one might believe is not to see what one believes--at least--it is to see it, as believable, but it is not to see it, as scientifically demonstrated.

A dogma which is the object of faith for one intelligence, can be the object of science--of philosophy--for another.<sup>7</sup> The same man can for a

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, II, q. 1, art. 5: All science is derived from self-evident and therefore seen principles; wherefore all objects of science must needs be, in a fashion, seen.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II, II, q. 1, art. 4: Faith implies assent of the intellect to that which is believed. Now the intellect assents to a thing in two ways. First, through being moved to assent by its very object, which is known either by itself (as in the case of first principles, which are held by the habit of understanding), or through something else already known (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). Secondly the intellect assents to something, not through being sufficiently moved to this assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice, whereby it turns voluntarily to one side rather than to the other: and if this be accompanied by doubt and fear of the opposite side, there will be opinion, while, if there be certainty and no fear of the other side, there will be faith.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., II, II, q. 1, art. 5, ad. 3: Things which can be proved by demonstration are reckoned among the articles of faith, not because they are believed simply by all, but because they are a necessary presupposition to matters of faith, so that those who do not know them by demonstration must know them first of all by faith.

moment make an act of faith--then turn towards the reasons for knowing, and be convinced by a scientific insight. He multiplies himself thus in two intellectual acts of different essences--he sees the same thing from two points of view.

Therefore, faith and knowledge have not the same formal object. If we were all equally able to develop our natures, and if we had the time and the will to do it, we would reach a knowledge by scientific principles, of the truths considered by philosophy. It would be for us a natural preamble to faith, and thus widen and elevate our knowledge.

Such might be the logical order, that is, to know from the philosophical truth, the spirituality and the immortality of the soul, the existence and perfection of God, then, to believe in the superior dogmas that God reveals to man, and that human reason is radically powerless to demonstrate by its own light.

But would it not be better to satisfy oneself with faith and to apply one's entire mind to believe, and not to know, even in the realm where scientific demonstration is possible?

The light of evidence dominates reason and forces its assent: it would not seem to be very meritorious to give so necessary an adherence. On the contrary, the partial obscurity of revelation leaves the will free to force the intelligence to faith or to maintain it in its independence. Therefore, belief is more voluntary and consequently more meritorious.

But it is worthy of praise and of reward to seek voluntarily to acquire the knowledge which is suitable to our nature.



If a dominant light is the result of our rational investigations, think of the work and the perseverance required to move toward that term. That work is well and good: well directed, inspired by an elevated intention, it has its merit, its value, and elevates our soul.

After all, faith has nothing to fear, in its purity, from a philosophy wisely understood. Of course, it would ruin belief in its foundation if one would believe only through reasons strictly demonstrative. One must not confuse things: the supernatural truths are imposed on us, by the authority of God, and the influence of grace. The motives of credibility invite us to faith, make it reasonable, without, however, proving the dogma.<sup>8</sup>

But he who is disposed with all his soul, to believe everything which is of faith, keeps all the merit of his belief, even when he sees the truth, by evidence of reason, of that intermixture--as the existence of God.<sup>9</sup> He adheres with love to everything which is divinely revealed. That is the source of his merit: he loves truth under all its forms and at all its degrees, be it known voluntarily or by supernatural means.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., II, II, q. 2, art. 9, ad. 3: The believer has sufficient motive for believing, for he is moved by the authority of Divine teaching confirmed by miracles, and what is more, by the inward instinct of the Divine invitation: hence he does not believe lightly. He has not, however, sufficient reason for scientific knowledge, hence he does not lose the merit.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., II, II, q. 2, art. 10. The act of faith can be meritorious, in so far as it is subject to the will, not only as to the use, but also as to the assent. Now human reason in support of what we believe, may stand in a twofold relation to the will of the believer--First, as preceding the act of the will; as, for instance, when a man either has not the will, or not a prompt will, to believe, unless he be moved by human reasons; and in this way human reason diminishes the merit of faith.

Thus it is, that the nature of man, although as the object of faith, is clearly set forth by revelation, can be the object of knowledge, from the point of view of philosophy. The nature of man is a proper object of the intellect of man. Submitting to God, in what he can understand, man is satisfied, when he reveals the truth, by that intelligence he has from God, and pays to Him the homage of his unfolded faculties by exercising that prerogative which is the noblest thing in man--that image and likeness of His Maker. St. Thomas constantly gives a magnificent example of reason allied to faith. His theology is always accompanied by philosophy. He demonstrates everything which is demonstrable. He exposes all probability, in the light of reason, of what is not susceptible of integral proof. Here we will endeavor to show his truly philosophical explanation of the Nature of Man.

## CHAPTER I

### MATERIAL BEINGS

According to St. Thomas, who follows Aristotle, nature is an internal principle of activity.<sup>1</sup> Nature may be understood to mean what a thing is, and what it does. It does what it does, because it is what it is: operation follows form. St. Thomas says "the nature of each thing is shown by its operation."<sup>2</sup> The reality and change in nature are explained by the theory of potency and act, which reduced to material things is that of hylomorphism, matter and form. Every corporeal being is a composite of undetermined matter, and of a determining and specific principle or form.

In the realm of corporeal beings, St. Thomas teaches that matter does not exist alone without form, nor form without matter.<sup>3</sup> God creates complete beings.<sup>4</sup> The clear understanding of the definitions of matter and form and their interrelations will give us a beginning of the philosophy of St. Thomas on Man. This theory as applied to his doctrine on man characterizes that philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup>De Ente et Essentia, St. Thomas Aquinas, Translated from the Latin by Clare M. Riedl, M. A., St. Michael's College, Toronto, Canada, 1934, Ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 76, art. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I, q. 50, art. 1: There is never found a potency which is never perfected by some act and for this reason in Prime Matter there is always some form.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., q. 90, art. 4, Body: ...For it is clear that God made the first things in their perfect natural state, as their species required.

That matter, which although it is not nothing--which is only in potency--which is not active in any way--is called by St. Thomas, Primary Matter. It has only the capability of becoming, and although having no form by itself, is not, however, in fact, deprived of all form. Privation is a principle of nature, only inasmuch as matter, in being transformed, is deprived of one form, in order that another form may take its place. Prime Matter cannot be known by itself, because everything that is known, is known by its form. We can have an idea of Prime Matter only through analogy. At one time matter is known under one form, and at another time, under another form. Because we see the same matter under different forms, we realize that matter is susceptible to a variety of forms. This unformed, undetermined matter, we call Prime Matter.<sup>6</sup>

All bodies have matter in their constitution, but not matter alone: all bodies also have form. Consequently, they are composite substances, twofold in aspect. Matter needs something besides itself to constitute a body--it needs a form.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>I-II, Commentary On the Physics of Aristotle, I, Lecture XII: According to Aristotle, Nature which is the first subject of change, that is, Prime Matter, cannot be known by itself because all that is known is known by its form. Now Prime Matter is considered as submitted to all form, but it is known by analogy, i. e., by a proportion. It is thus that we know that wood is something distinct from the form of the ladder, and from the bed, because sometimes it is under one form and sometimes under another. Likewise as we see air sometimes becoming water we must say that something existing under the form of air is sometimes under the form of water. Consequently, what is something distinct from the form of air comports itself towards natural substances, as the bronze towards a statue and wood towards a bed. And in general as all that which is material and unformed towards a form, and that is what we call Prime Matter.

<sup>7</sup>The Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Literally Translated by the English Dominican Fathers, Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd.,

The natural disposition of Prime Matter is to take the forms of the simple bodies. Then, these dispose it to take the forms of mixed substances, when it is determined to take them, from the exterior. By this transformation it may take these forms of the mixed substances immediately, and hence, will never exist without form, or under a form of body which is not that of a specifically qualified substance.<sup>8</sup>

How did the forms of these substances--these substantial forms--arise at the beginning of the Universe? As to what constitutes the inorganic or simple bodies, St. Thomas says that at the very beginning God created matter under multifarious substantial forms, and that by means of combinations produced by the interaction of bodies, new substances were formed--not by creation, but by natural generation. The forms of the first bodies were not created separately, strictly speaking; they did not receive from God a proper being. It was the corporeal beings, with their substantial forms, that were created. Neither is there in the generation of composite substances, a

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London, 1929, III, 34, Bk. II, Ch. 89: Now a form is united to matter without any medium whatever: since to be the act of such and such a body is competent to a form by its very nature and not by anything else. Consequently neither is there anything that makes one thing out of matter and form, except the agent which reduced the potentiality to act, as Aristotle proves (Metaph. 8): For matter and form are related as potentiality and act.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Bk. II, Ch. 89: For although the generation of simple bodies does not proceed in order, since each of them has an immediate form of Primary Matter; in the generation of other bodies, there must be an order in the generations, by reason of the many intermediate forms between the first elemental form and the final form which is the term of generation: wherefore there are a number of generations and corruptions following one another.

creation of forms. To be exact, there is no generation of substantial forms. What is engendered, what is produced, is the compound of form and of matter, and for that, the activity of the physical agent, together with the potential capacity of Prime Matter, is sufficient.<sup>9</sup>

Now these forms are realizations conceived eternally by the Divine Intelligence. Therefore, although they are produced, in time, through the creation of bodies, their first origin is in the eternal types. There, in the Intellect of God, from all eternity, they are essentially determined, as determining principles. Prime Matter, however, is essentially undetermined, because, in se, it is a principle determinable only.

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<sup>9</sup>Summa Theologica, II, 26, I, q. 45, art. 8: The doubt on this subject arises from the forms which, some said, do not come into existence by the action of nature, but previously exist in matter; for they asserted that forms are latent. This arose from ignorance concerning matter and form and from not knowing how to distinguish between potentiality and act. For because forms pre-exist in matter, in potentiality, they asserted that they pre-existed simply. Others, however, said that the forms were given or caused by a separate agent by way of creation; and accordingly, that to each operation of nature is joined creation. But this opinion arose from ignorance concerning form. For they failed to consider that the form of the natural body is not subsisting, but is that by which a thing is. And therefore, since to be made and to be created properly belong to a subsisting thing alone, as shown above, (A. 4) it does not belong to forms to be made or to be created, but to be concreated. What, indeed, is properly made by the natural agent is the composite, which is made from matter.

Hence in the works of nature creation does not enter, but is presupposed to the work of nature.

Rep. Obj. 1. Forms begin to be actual when the composite things are made, not as though they were made directly, but only indirectly.

Rep. Obj. 2. The active qualities in nature act by virtue of substantial forms: and therefore the natural agent not only produces its like according to quality, but according to species.

Rep. Obj. 4. The operation of nature takes place only on the presupposition of created principles; and thus the products of nature are called creatures.

Matter is unknowable by itself, because it has no being by itself. Its proper essence is to be pure potentiality. But we know matter, indirectly, when we know the forms whereof it is the subject, and with which it constitutes corporeal substances. It is form which gives a corporeal substance the power of acting. Everything is active, even an inorganic body, but not everything has the same degree of activity. Matter contributes to a corporeal substance the capacity of suffering, that is, of undergoing, or of receiving, the effect of an action. The intellect, in associating matter with the form, succeeds in obtaining some idea of it. Therefore, the form is at the same time, principle and end: principle of substantial being, constitution or quality, and principle of operation, or end. A body acts by its form on another body, which by its matter, is susceptible of receiving the action. The effect of this action is a form arising in the latter body, from the potentiality of its matter, and at the same time, from the active potency, which the former body possesses by its form.<sup>10</sup>

Two other characteristics, activity and passivity, opposed to each other, confirm the duality of the composition of corporeal substances. Bodies are inert, unable to move themselves, as bodies. Yet they appear as endowed with a certain natural activity. They act upon one another by movement, heat, light, magnetism, etc. The physical forces are the proximate causes by which bodies produce these manifold actions. It would seem that

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., I, 20, q. 115, art. 1: A body acts forasmuch as it is in act, on a body forasmuch as it is in potentiality...Now a body is composed of potentiality and act; and therefore it is both active and passive...

they possess these forces which qualify them. For example, a body heats, because it is hot. Inertia denotes the existence of a passive element in bodies when they are at rest, and of an active element when they are in motion. Passivity is the capacity of becoming, not of doing; passivity is due to a potentiality. Activity is a radiation of being, and of the specific nature of a being; it is due to an actuality. A body is passive because of a potency: it acts because of the actual existent presence of a cause, and because it has such a nature.

It follows that to be able to act is a natural emanation (St. Thomas uses this word, Summa Theologica, I, q. 45, art. 1) of a form which determines potential matter to a specific actuality. St. Thomas grants to the most material substances a certain active potency, that is, a certain power of acting. According to him, existence would be useless, without an end: existence would be inexplicable, if the active power, which things are seen to possess, had no proper purpose. It is by such a power that a thing works toward the end of its being. That perfection is due a being because God would not create anything, without endowing it with the power of perfecting its existence, and attaining the end for which it was made,<sup>11</sup> even as His

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<sup>11</sup>Contra Gentiles, I, 19, Bk. III, Ch. 64:...Natural bodies are moved and work towards an end, although they have no knowledge of an end from the fact that always or nearly always that which is best happens to them: nor would they be made otherwise if they were made by art. Now it is impossible that things without knowledge of an end should act for an end, and attain to that end in an orderly manner, unless they be moved to that end by someone who has knowledge of the end: as the arrow is directed to the mark by the archer. Therefore the whole operation of nature must be directed by some knowledge. This must be traced back to God immediately or mediately: because every subordinate art and knowledge must take its principles from a higher one, as may be seen in speculative and practical sciences. Therefore God governs the world by His Providence.



Wisdom, as well as His Goodness, is opposed to depriving a creature of what is suitable to what it is. Because a thing is in act it acts: the more a thing is in act, the more power it has to act.<sup>12</sup>

The change that we see being effected in natural bodies is described by Saint Thomas, in terms of potency and act: it is the motion of going from potency to act. Change may be either substantial or accidental. When matter loses one form, and that form is replaced by another, the change is called substantial. If, on the other hand, the substance remains the same, but changes in size, color or shape, the change is called accidental. A qualitative change is not the supplanting of one form by another, but is the effect produced by virtue of the substantial form. For example, when elements, with their opposing passive and active qualities, combine to make a compound, the compound body participates in the nature of the two simple bodies. The

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<sup>12</sup>Summa Theologica, I, 18, I, q. 105, art. 5: Some have understood God to work in every agent in such a way that created power has any effect in things, but that God alone is the immediate cause of everything wrought; for instance, that it is not fire that gives heat, but God in the fire, and so forth. But this is impossible. First, because the order of cause and effect would be taken away from created things: and this would imply lack of power in the Creator: for it is due to the power of the cause, that it bestows active power on its effect; secondly, because the active powers which are seen to exist in things, would be bestowed on things, to no purpose, if these wrought nothing through them. Indeed all things created would seem, in a way, to be purposeless, if they lacked an operation proper to them; since the purpose of everything is its operation. For the less perfect is always for the sake of the more perfect: and consequently as the matter is for the sake of the form, so the form which is the first act, is for the sake of its operation, which is the second act, and thus operation is the end of the creature. We must therefore understand that God works in things in such a manner that things have their proper operation.

quality of a simple body, though distinct from its substantial form, yet, nevertheless, acts by virtue of that substantial form.<sup>13</sup> A common kind of accidental change is local change, which in terms of potency and act, is: a body in a particular locus is potentially in another locus. The motion from one locus to another terminates the potentiality and establishes the actuality.

The potency of matter and the actuality of form are the effective principles of the phenomenon of change. It is because matter in various quantities can receive various forms and can be thus qualified and actualized that change can be consummated.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Opuscul. De Mixtione Elementorum. We must find a means which safeguards the truth of the combination and permits us to say that the elements are not therein totally destroyed, but that they remain in the compound in a certain way. Let us consider therefore that the active and passive qualities of the elements are contrary to each other, and susceptible of increase or decrease. Now from contrary qualities, susceptible of increase or decrease, can be constituted an average quality which participates in the nature of the two extremes, as grey is the mean between white and black, and cool is the mean between hot and cold. Hence by the reduction of the extremes of elementary qualities are constituted a certain mean quality which is the quality proper to a compound body, differing however in different compounds, according to the different proportions of the different combination: and that mean quality is the disposition proper to the form of the compound body, as the simple quality is toward a simple body. As the extremes are in the mean, which participates in the nature of both, likewise the qualities of simple bodies are in the proper quality of the compound body. The quality of the simple bodies is something other than the substantial form of that body, and nevertheless, it acts by virtue of the substantial form. Otherwise, heat would heat only, but would not have the virtue of bringing into act the substantial form of fire, since nothing acts outside of its own species. Hence there are present potentially not actually, in compound bodies, the powers (potencies) of the substantial forms of the simple bodies.

<sup>14</sup>Q. D., De Anima, Art. 9, page 407, Col. 2, Upper half: Just as from this that matter is constituted in its corporeal being through forms, it immediately follows that there are in it dimensions through which divisible matter is understood through different parts, so thus it can be, according to its different parts capable (susceptible) of different forms.

In other words, in the corporeal compound there are increasingly enriched new characteristics in the more and more perfect productions "of the hothouse" of Nature. In this theory, the form is the substantial form which, with Prime Matter, constitutes a corporeal substance, the constituent substance. On the other hand, the principles making the complementary characteristics of the already formed thing, are accidental forms. As the substance which remains the same substance changes accidental form, likewise, Prime Matter, which is the primitive determinable, and permanent base of the corporeal, receives new and different substantial forms, by the action of certain agents.<sup>15</sup>

Corporeal substances, that is--bodies, have common properties which give them general characteristics, such as extension and divisibility.<sup>16</sup> They

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<sup>15</sup>Contra Gentiles, Book IV, Ch. 63: In all natural changes, the subject remains, in which various forms succeed one another: and these forms may be either accidental--as when white is changed into black--or substantial--as when air is changed into fire: hence these are called formal changes...At present we have to inquire how one subject is changed into another: since nature cannot do this. For every work of nature presupposes matter, whereby subjects are individualized: so that nature cannot make this substance to be that substance; for instance, that this finger be that finger. But matter is subject to the Divine Power; since by it was it brought into being: wherefore it is possible, by the Divine Power, for this or that individual substance to be changed into this or that already existing substance. For just as, by the power of a natural agent, whose operation does not go beyond the changing of a form in an already existing subject, the whole of one thing is changed into the whole of another by a change of species or form (for instance this air into this already kindled fire), so by the power of God, which presupposes no matter, but produces it, this matter is changed into that matter and, consequently, this individual into that; for matter is the principle of individuality, just as form is the principle of the species...

<sup>16</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 7, art. 3: It is necessary to know that the body which is the complete expression of the size is taken in two senses; mathematically when we consider in it only the quantity and naturally when we consider the matter and the form. For the natural body, it is evident that it cannot be infinite in act. Because every natural body has a determined substantial form, and as the substantial form carries with it the accidents,

have, too, particular properties, which distinguish them from one another. It is reasonable to say, then, that corporeal substances have in them a common fundamental constituent which is a principle of extension and divisibility because bodies can be ordinarily considered as extended, and extension is essentially divisible. An accidental property of bodies, which follows from that of extension, and one which is most closely connected with substance, is dimensive quantity. The quantitative substance is later affected with qualities, such as color, and so forth, by means of the quantity.<sup>17</sup> It is from that of dimensive quantity, that other material accidents follow.<sup>18</sup>

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it is necessary, if the form is determined, that the accidents be determined also. The quantity being comprised in the accidents, it follows that in every natural body it must be determined more or less because it is impossible that a natural body be infinite.

<sup>17</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. IV, Ch. 63: ...Of all accidents, dimensive quantity adheres most closely to substance: afterwards, with quantity as a medium, the substance is affected with qualities: for instance with color by means of the surface. Hence the division of the other accidents is incidental to the division of quantity. Further, qualities are the principles of actions and passions, as well as certain relationships, for instance a father and son, master and servant, and so on; while some relationships are founded immediately on quantity, for instance greater and lesser, double and half and the like...The rule in natural transmutations, where the substance remains as the subject of change while the accidents are changed.

<sup>18</sup>Summa Theologica, III, q. 77, art. 2: (first of all, because)... Something having quantity and color and affected by other accidents is perceived by the sense; nor is sense deceived in such. Secondly, because the first disposition of matter is dimensive quantity, hence Plato also assigned Great and Small as the first differences of matter (Aristotle, Metaph. iv). And because the first subject is matter, the consequence is that all other accidents are related to their subject through the medium of dimensive quantity; just as the first subject of color is said to be the surface on which account some have maintained that dimensions are the substances of bodies, as is said in Metaph. iii. And since, when the subject is withdrawn, the accidents remain according to the being which they had before, it follows that all accidents remain founded upon dimensive quantity.

Extension by itself, that is, abstract, mathematical, geometrical extension, is indefinitely divisible. But in order that a body exist, it is necessary for it to have a certain unity of being, and therefore, a certain indivisibility, following from a constituent principle of indivisibility. The intrinsic cause of extension, of divisible quantity--matter, is insufficient to constitute by itself, a corporeal *essence*; it is powerless to confer indivisible unity on a being. There is required a unifying principle which determines extension in the substance itself.<sup>19</sup> For the three dimensions of matter to be effected, another principle is necessary to fix its potentiality, in a positive extension, and accomplish the concrete formation of the body, and that is: the constituent form.<sup>20</sup> Form gives to matter its shape and exterior proportions. At the same time, it permeates and diffuses throughout those dimensions, because it is in that quantity, that the body is what it is.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. 49: The principle of distinction between individuals of the same species is the division of matter in respect of quantity; because the form of this fire differs not from the form of that fire, except by the fact of its being in different parts into which matter is divided; nor is this otherwise than by division of quantity, without which substance is indivisible. Now that which is received into a body is received into it according to quantitative division. Therefore a form is not received into a body, except as individualized.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Bk. II, Ch. 50: For everything composed of matter and form is a body; since matter cannot receive various forms except in respect of its various parts. And this diversity of parts cannot be in matter except inasmuch as common matter is divided into several by the dimensions existing in matter; for without quantity substance is indivisible.

<sup>21</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 14, art. 2, rep. obj. 1: Inasmuch as the form perfects the matter by fixing its existence, it is in a certain way diffused in it; and it returns to itself inasmuch as it has existence in itself. Therefore those cognitive faculties which are not subsisting, but are the acts of organs, do not know themselves, as in the case of each of the senses; whereas those cognitive faculties which are subsisting, know themselves.

Matter, according to St. Thomas, is the principle of individuation: form, the principle of individuality: the one passive, the other active. An individual is that which is undivided in itself and divided from other things. It is matter that makes possible the multiplicity of certain forms. Matter, however, is not the cause of that multiplicity and distinction of things.<sup>22</sup> It is form that delimits and unifies certain portions of matter. That is, within a species, there may be numerous individuals: they are specified by the form. The individuals within a species differ numerically: they are distinguished by their individual, designated matter.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Contra Gentiles, Ch. XI: Whatever things having a cause of their being are distinct from one another have a cause of their distinction; because a thing is made a being according as it is made one, undivided in itself and distinct from others. Now if matter, by its diversity, is the cause of the distinction of things, we must suppose that matters are in themselves distinct. Moreover it is evident that every matter has being from something else, since it was proved above that everything, that is in any way whatsoever, is from God. Therefore something else is the cause of distinction in matters: and consequently the first cause of the distinction of things cannot be a diversity of matter.

...Form is more noble than matter, since it is its perfection and act. Therefore He does not produce such and such forms for the sake of such and such matters, but rather He produced such and such matters that there might be such and such forms. Therefore the specific distinction in things, which is according to their form, is not on account of their matter: but on the contrary matters were created diverse, that they might be suitable for diverse forms.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., Bk. II, Ch. 75: For seemingly every form that is one specifically and many in number is individualized by matter: since things that are one in species and many in number, agree in form and differ in matter...Now every form that is individualized by matter whereof it is the act, is a material form. Because the being of a thing must needs depend on that from which it has its individuality: for just as common principles belong to the essence of the species, so individualizing principles belong to the essence of this particular individual.

Matter and form are proportionate: a certain act is produced in its proper matter. And therefore forms are multiplied in accordance with the multiplication of bodies, the form, however, not depending on the matter, but the other way around.<sup>24</sup>

The power of acting that belongs to elementary bodies is an inherent principle of movement, and is due to their substantial form. This movement must be executed by an external agent. For example, fire has in its substantial form an internal cause of movement, upward. This lowest group in the order of material beings--the elementary, inanimate, inorganic natures--have an internal principle of activity, but their motion is imposed on them from the exterior. They are moved, rather than they move themselves. They cannot initiate, modify, nor arrest their movement. There is a difference between a principle of movement in the simple, inorganic bodies, and the principle of movement in the more complex, organic bodies, and that difference lies in the origin of the movement. In all cases it is due to the substantial form. In the organic bodies, the power of acting is a principle of self movement. That essential difference is shown in this way: that the inorganic body is not made to act by some organ of itself upon another part of its own body. The inorganic body acts simply: it is sufficient for it to be naturally qualified to do simply what it does. The organic body, on the other hand, has complex operations to perform, hence it needs many organs to act in its body and move it.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Summa Theologica, q. 3, art. 2, rep. obj. 3: Forms which can be received in matter are individualized by matter, which cannot be in another as in a subject since it is the first underlying subject; although form of itself, unless something else prevents it, can be received by many.

As activity is a consequence of being, the action is indicative of the substance. By those activities beings are classified naturally according to the varying degrees of their perfections. Inanimate beings--beings without life--act in their own characteristic manner: they are put in motion by external agents. But there are beings endowed with a more powerful and directive activity. They are the animate beings. The more active a nature is, the more being there is in it, and the more it participates in the Divine Being. In a superior group such as this, are the animate--the living beings. There is in them an intrinsic principle of existence, a formal cause of being, namely, the substantial form, which is superior in the hierarchy of forms to those inanimate beings. In living beings, that substantial form is called the soul.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Q. D. De Anima, art. 9, p. 408, col. 1, upper half: The diversity of accidents is sufficient for the diversity of operations in things less perfect. But in things more perfect there is further required a diversity of parts; and this all the more so, the more perfect the form is. For we shall see that different operations are suitable (proper) to fire according to different accidents; such as to be borne upward according to (because of) its lightness; to be warm because of its heat, and so on; but a certain one of these operations is proper to fire because of some one of its parts. However in animated bodies which have more noble forms, the parts are called and are different according to different operations. But since it is proper that the order of instruments be according to the order of operations, but of the various operations which are from the soul, one naturally precedes the other.

It is necessary that one part of the body be moved by the other to its operation (or activity). Thus, therefore, between the soul (according as it is the mover, moving principle and principle of operations), and the body, some medium (some middle thing) falls (lies); because, by means of some first part first moved, it moves the other parts to their operations (activities); just as by means of the heart the other members are moved to their activities (operations).

<sup>26</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 76, art. 4, rep. obj. 2: The soul does not move the body by its essence, as the form of the body, but by the motive power, the act of which presupposes the body to be already actualized by the soul: so that the soul by its motive power is the part which moves: and the animate body is the part moved.



St. Thomas seeks in those beings in which life is most evident, what principally and above all, makes us consider them as living. What he finds, constitutes the proper characteristic of life. He discovers that characteristic, in noting what is the first and last manifestation of that which we call life. It is apparent that animals are living. We say that they live as soon as we observe that they move, per se. As long as that movement continues, they live. When movement ceases, there is no life: they are dead. It follows that spontaneous movement, the principle of which is in the subject is the mark of life.<sup>27</sup>

Life, then, is attributed to certain beings, because they carry on certain works. To move one's self locally, to change one's self by nutrition, to feel, to think,--is to live. Any one of those acts of a being is sufficient for it to be called alive. These activities appear to be divided in groups, and so it will be necessary to classify living beings in different genera, according to a sort of hierarchy. There are different modes of living, but common to all modes are operations which are accomplished by the

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<sup>27</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 18, art. 1: We can gather to what things life belongs, and to what it does not, from such things as manifestly possess life. Now life manifestly belongs to animals, for it is said in De Vegeb., i, that in animals life is manifest. We must, therefore, distinguish living from lifeless things, by comparing them to that by reason of which animals are said to live: and that it is in which life is manifested first and remains last. We say then that an animal begins to live when it begins to move of itself: and as long as such movement appears in it, so long is it considered to be alive. When it no longer has any movement of itself, but is only moved by another power, then its life is said to fail, and the animal to be dead. Whereby it is clear that those things are properly called living that move themselves by some kind of movement, whether it be movement properly so called as the act of an imperfect thing, i. e., of a thing in potentiality, is called movement; or movement in a more general sense, as when said of the act of a perfect thing, as understanding and feeling are called movement. Accordingly all things are said to be alive that determine themselves to movement or operation of any kind: whereas those things that cannot by their nature do so.

subject itself. Therefore, the living are beings, which have in their constitution both mover and moved.<sup>28</sup>

The soul is the first mover for the acts of life. It acts through secondary movers, namely, its potencies. The organs execute the movements by moving one another.

The animate beings, those beings which move themselves, possess, in se, the principle of their movements. By their different works, operations or movements, they indicate principles of different degrees of life. By these various operations something can be discovered concerning the essence of their subjects. In such a series, in the most perfect beings, the superior life is associated with all preceding kinds of life.<sup>29</sup>

Considering now, in the hierarchy of material beings, the animate beings, there are the plants, which are characterized by sensible life; and man, who is characterized by intellectual and rational life. Since there is a vegetative life, a sensible life, an intellectual or rational life, there must be a vegetative soul, a sensible soul, an intellectual or rational soul. cannot be called living, unless by a similitude.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., I, q. 76, art. 4, rep. obj. 2, ch.III: The soul does not move the body by its essence, as the form of the body, but by the motive power, the act of which presupposes the body to be already actualized by the soul: so that the soul by its motive power is the part which moves; and the animate body is the part moved.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., q. 76. art. 4: ...The intellective soul...as it virtually contains the sensitive and nutritive souls, so does it virtually contain all inferior forms, and itself alone does whatever the imperfect forms do in other things. The same is to be said of the sensitive soul in brute animals, and of the nutritive soul in plants, and universally of all more perfect forms with regard to the imperfect.

The first is the soul of the plant; the second is the soul of the animal; the third is the soul of man. Those souls are increasingly more perfect, and their operations reveal a more powerful and nobler principle, since it is the soul itself, which is the principle of vital operations.<sup>30</sup>

Starting with that group which manifests the least autonomy, there are the plants, the lowest in the order of living beings. In them there is a principle surpassing the active and passive principles of the inanimate bodies--a principle of unification, the activating principle of vegetative life. The nature of plants is to move and to nourish themselves in order to grow, to develop and to reproduce. They live, but they cannot go beyond the limits of their vegetative nature. Their specific principle is still dependent on, and completely immersed in, matter. They move themselves, not by their form as a principle or end of action, but only as an instrument of a principal agent. Their nature is such that their action and end is determined for them.<sup>31</sup>

Of course there are required certain necessary, external conditions, but it is the plant which acts and pullulates by making use of the elements. Hence there must be in it a principle of energy, to assimilate the air and

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<sup>30</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. 90: The nearer a body is to primary matter, the less noble it is according as it is more in potentiality and less in complete actuality. Now the elements are nearer than mixed bodies to primary matter, since they are the proximate matter of mixed bodies. Consequently the elemental bodies are less noble than mixed bodies as to their species. Wherefore, since the more noble bodies have more noble forms, it is impossible that the noblest form of all, which is the intellective soul, be united to the bodies of the elements.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.: Every living body has some kind of local movement proceeding from its soul; for the heavenly bodies (if indeed they be animated) have a circular movement; perfect animals a progressive movement; shellfish a movement of expansion and contraction; plants a movement of increase and decrease;

the surrounding elements. But that spontaneous action is not conscious. The plant does not know that it operates, not how, nor why. It performs a movement whose intellectual direction is above it. It obeys blindly a master who knows for it the principle, the form, and the end of its activity.

Animals are higher than plants, less restricted, and have, over and above a vegetative soul, a sensitive soul, which receives sense species, but receives them immaterially, accidentally, and separated from matter. They receive the sensible species by means of phantasms. By the senses, animals know the things around them and are impelled toward them or repelled by them, because they can form images of those things within themselves. They have the power of sensible representation of what is outside themselves; they have a certain sensible perception; they have certain feelings of pleasure and of pain. This phenomenon of sensation cannot be explained by purely material principles. Another distinguishing characteristic of animal life is that of local motion, by means of which an animal obtains what it needs.<sup>32</sup>

It has, then, some sensible knowledge, some sensible affection, and some power over its body--and that, by virtue of an activity proceeding from itself. The animal, therefore, has its proper life, namely, sensible animal

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all of which are kinds of local movement. Whereas in the elements there is no sign of movement proceeding from a soul, but only such as is natural. Therefore they are not living bodies.

<sup>32</sup>Q. D. De Anima, art. 13, p. 426, col. 2, upper half: And again it is proper consequently that there should be some movement through which it is arrived at (i. e., it arrives at) the desired thing, and this belongs to the motive potency.

life. By that kind of life, namely, sensible--animality belongs to them. All animals have one of the senses at some degree, and some movements from their sense, or senses. It is evident, then, that the animal form is less dependent on Matter, though Matter still retains its hold on it. Such a form acts with matter, and in matter.<sup>33</sup>

The soul of the brute animal is not subsistent.<sup>34</sup> It is not endowed

<sup>33</sup>Q. D. De Anima, art. 1, p. 369, col. 2: This can also be considered from the point of view of form, for there is discovered that among the forms of inferior bodies by so much is one higher as it is the more assimilated to, and approaches, the higher principles. And this indeed can be weighed from the proper operations of the forms. For the forms of the elements which are the lowest and closest to matter, have no operation exceeding active and passive qualities; as thick and thin, hot and cold, moist and dry. And these, however, are the forms of mixed bodies, besides other operations, have some operations which they get from the heavenly bodies (as the magnet) from a participation of heavenly power. And above these forms are the souls of plants, which have a similitude not only to heavenly bodies but to the movers of heavenly bodies; as they are the principles of a certain motion since they are moving themselves. Above these further still, are the souls of brutes which have already a similarity to the substance moving the heavenly bodies, not only in the operations in which they move bodies, but also in this, that they are knowing, their knowing, though, is of material things and materially, whence they need material organs. Above these finally, are human souls, which have a similarity to the superior substances even in the genus of cognition because they are able to know material things by understanding them. In this they are different because the intellect of the human soul by nature acquires cognition of material things, through cognition of material things which is by means of the senses. Thus, therefore, from the operation of the human soul the mode of its being can be known inasmuch as it has an operation which transcends matter; its being is elevated above the body and is not dependent on it.

<sup>34</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 75, art. 3: The ancient philosophers made no distinction between sense and intellect, and referred both to a corporeal principle...Plato, however, drew a distinction between intellect and sense; yet he referred both to an incorporeal principle, maintaining that sensing, just as understanding, belongs to the soul as such. From this it follows that even the souls of brute animals are subsistent. But Aristotle held that the operations of the soul, understanding alone is performed without a corporeal organ. On the other hand, sensation and the consequent operations of the sensitive soul are evidently accomplished with change in the body; thus in the act of vision, the pupil of the eye is affected by a reflexion of colour: and so with the other senses. Hence it is clear that the sensitive

with intelligence; it has neither the notion of the abstract and the universal, nor the insight into rational principles, nor the judgment derived from those principles. The sensible or animal soul, however, must be powerful enough to cause in the animal, a sensible similitude, that is, an image of material objects (immaterially) in order that it may have a certain awareness of its proper act.

The principle of life of the plant, and the soul of the animal, not being independent of matter, are not immortal. They are perishable, as are the forms of the inorganic substances, because they have no being which properly belongs to them. When matter becomes living, it takes a new form, and if it be a plant or an animal that is made, the vital form is possessed entirely by the living thing, so that when the plant or the animal dies, the life that is lost is without a subject. The body, not being able to carry on living operations any longer, disintegrates. Since matter is not able to conserve further its principle, this principle cannot continue to exist.

Does this mean that the formal principles are really destroyed in the transformation of inorganic or of living bodies? This expression is improper if it be a question of forms depending on matter, because what does not exist, in se, cannot be destroyed or corrupted. The material composite exists in itself, although it exists only by the form it has. It is subject to corruption, and it corrupts by losing its form, but its essential elements,

soul has no per se operation of its own, and that every operation of the sensitive soul belongs to the composite. Wherefore we conclude that as the souls of brute animals have no per se operations they are not subsistent. For the operation of anything follows the mode of its being.

matter and form, having no actual existence apart from the composite, cannot properly be corrupted or destroyed. It is the body which corrupts. The first form reverts to potency as it was in matter before the composite existed in nature.<sup>35</sup> The non-subsistent form is neither destructible nor corruptible in itself but it does undergo, accessorially, the corruption of the corporeal substance in the sense that the composite, which it formed, exists no longer, and that another composite replaces it, constituted by another form.<sup>36</sup>

According to St. Thomas matter is uniform in substance and in potency of acting, in all points of each inorganic body, be it simple or compound. Life alone may require diverse potencies which may be localized in various parts of the body. In the higher animals the potencies are dispersed in differentiated organs. The system of nutrition is associated with the potency of nutrition, but distinct from it. In the vegetative order diverse functions are under the direction of many organic departments. Likewise in the sensitive order, for example, sensation has its proper instruments.

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<sup>35</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 90, art. 2: Since to be made is the way to existence, a thing must be made in such a way as is suitable to its mode of existence. Now that properly exists which itself has existence; as it were, subsisting in its own existence. Wherefore only **substances** are properly and truly called beings; whereas an accident has not existence, but something is (modified) by it, and so far is it called a being; for instance, whiteness is called a being, because by it something is white. Hence it is said (Metaph. vii, Did. vi, i) that an accident should be described as of something rather than as something. The same is to be said of all non-subsistent forms. Therefore, properly speaking, it does not belong to any non-existing form to be made; but such are said to be made through the composite substances being made.

<sup>36</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. 79: Intelligible being is more lasting than sensible being. Now in sensible things that which is by way of first recipient, namely, primary matter, is incorruptible as to its substance.

The question arises how it is possible for what is one to become many.

St. Thomas answers, that in plants and in the lower animals:

In those animals which although divided live, there is one soul in act and several in potency. Now by fragmentation they (souls) are reproduced into an actual multitude (multitude of actual souls) as happens to all the forms which have extension and matter.<sup>37</sup>

In regard to the more perfect animals, he says that what is first called upon to receive the perfection, which the soul brings, is the body in its totality, but as the soul is destined to be the form of an organized body, what is secondarily called upon, and in natural relation to the whole, is the susceptibility of each organ of receiving animation.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Q. D. De Spirit. Creat., art. 4, obj. 19.

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De Potentia, q. 3, art. 12, rep. obj. 5: The reason why the dissection of an annulose animal is violent and unnatural is that the severed part was actually a part of the animal and perfected by its soul: so that by the dissection of the matter the soul remains in either part, which soul was actually one in the whole body, and potentially several. This is because in animals of this kind the whole body is composed of almost homogeneous parts, and their souls being of a lower degree of perfection than others, require but little diversity of organs. Hence it is that when a part is severed it can be a subject of the soul, as having sufficient organs for the purpose: as happens in the case of other like bodies such as wood, stone, water and air.

<sup>38</sup> Summa Theologica, I, q. 76, art. 8: The soul is the substantial form; and therefore it must be the form and the act, not only of the whole, but also of each part...But act is in that which actuates; wherefore the soul must be in the whole body, and in each part thereof....Since, however, the soul has not quantitative totality, neither essentially, nor accidentally, as we have seen; it is enough to say that the whole soul is in each part of the body, by totality of perfection and of essence, but not by totality of power....Since the soul requires a variety of parts, its relation to the whole is not the same as its relation to the parts; for to the whole it is compared primarily and essentially as to its proper and proportionate perfectible; but to the parts, secondarily, inasmuch as they are ordained to the whole.



The primary end--which is the formation of a total living being--evokes, as a means, the secondary end--which is the formation of the appropriate organs. The instruments which life as a whole requires are made by the soul, and that soul causes the body to exist for that life as a whole. The diversity thus formed in the parts of the organism, is a diversity of substantial constitution, in spite of the unity of the integral substance, and in spite of a diversity of configuration. Matter gives its concurrence to that variety and unity, because it is made for the needs of the form. Thus is shown, in the higher living beings especially--the finality of nature--more than in other material productions, namely, the ideal of the organic whole to be composed, and to direct the work by which life is constituted.

The more complex the nature of a corporeal living being is, the more complicated is the problem of the individual generation of that living being. In the vegetable kingdom life can be transmitted by diverse processes, though not solely to the degree of vegetation of one plant to another. In the animal kingdom, reproduction must transmit not only vegetative life, but also sensitive life. However, it remains attached to something material, for animality that is sensible only, is devoid of reason. Intellectuality, alone, is independent of matter. That reproductive power caused by the soul of the generating animal is a constant force, which brings forth the sensitive and vegetative soul in the body of the engendered animal.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Summa Theologica, I. q. 118, art. 1, rep. obj. 4: In perfect animals, generated by coition, the active force is in the semen of the male, as the Philosopher says (De Gener. Animal. ii, 3); but the foetal matter is provided by the female. In this matter the vegetable soul exists from the very beginning, not as to the second act, but as to the first act, as the sensitive soul is in the one who sleeps. But as soon as it begins to attract nourishment, then it already operates in act. This matter therefore is transmuted

But that principle of a twofold life does not appear at the very beginning of the animation of that body. The beginning is not sufficiently organized to be proportioned to a sensitive soul. After a certain time, the vegetative soul is not adequate. A sensitive soul must supervene, and as two souls cannot be together in the same living being, it is necessary that the primitive, vegetative soul yield its place to another more perfect one. The latter is the definitive soul of the animal, and it alone is capable of carrying on the work of vegetation and sensation. It has been brought to existence by the progressive movement of generation.<sup>40</sup>

by the power which is in the semen of the male, until it is actually informed by the sensitive soul; not as though the force itself which was in the semen becomes the sensitive soul; for thus, indeed, the generator and generated would be identical; moreover, this would be more like nourishment and growth than generation, as the Philosopher says. And after the sensitive soul, by the power of the active principle in the semen, has been produced in one of the principal parts of the thing generated, then it is that the sensitive soul of the offspring begins to work toward the perfection of its own body, by nourishment and growth. As to the active power which was in the semen, it ceases to exist, when the semen is dissolved and the (vital) spirit thereof vanishes. Nor is there anything unreasonable in this, because this force is not the principal but the instrumental agent; and the movement of an instrument ceases when once the effect has been produced.

<sup>40</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 76, art. 3: ...An animal would not be absolutely one, in which there were several souls. For nothing is absolutely one except by one form, by which a thing has existence: because a thing has from the same source both existence and unity; and therefore things which are denominated by various forms are not absolutely one; as, for instance, a white man. If, therefore, man were living by one form, the vegetative soul, and man by another form, the intellective soul, it would follow that man is not absolutely one.

CHAPTER II  
SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCES

GOD

We have shown that there are material beings, and that they are composites of matter and form. We have shown that not only do they exist, but that each thing has an operation or activity that belongs to it. Each being that exists is ordained to an operation which fulfils or completes or perfects it in being in some way. Merely to exist is not sufficient: it must work toward its end in a manner suitable to its mode of existence. To exist, for it, is but part of its being.

St. Thomas' analogous idea of being is the keystone of his philosophical explanation of reality. We saw that in things around us, to be, is not enough; they must perform certain prescribed operations to complete their being. From that St. Thomas reasons that there must be one thing in which to be is sufficient reason for being. That Thing is Being; It is God. He is above all Becoming; He is Being, per se.

From the things about us in nature, we see that every thing is in motion in some way. Every thing has its proper activity. The elements, lowest in the order of material natures, have their own operations. Air and fire rise, water and earth fall. Advancing upward in the scale there is an increasingly complex kind of activity, until we reach man.

From the movement that is manifested by all things St. Thomas, using the demonstration of Aristotle, shows that whatever is moved, is moved by another.

Unless an infinite regress is admitted, there is reached a prime mover, which itself is unmoved. And this we call God.

St. Thomas thus proves the existence of God from motion. He gives four other proofs: from efficient causality, from necessity, from the gradations and perfections found in things, and from the governance of the world.<sup>1</sup>

After demonstrating the existence of God, he shows the manner of His existence in order to determine His Essence. This he does by denying of Him the things that He is not. As God is in Himself, we do not know Him; we know Him by remotion, and analagously.

God is not a body, because a body must be put in motion and God has already been shown to be the Prime, Unmoved Mover. That first being must already be in act, and in no way in potentiality, because act is prior to potentiality, as only what is in act, can act. An animate body is nobler than an inanimate one. A body is not animate as a body, but because of the soul; therefore God is not a body.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 2, a. 3, Vol. I, Ch. XIII.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, q. 3, a. 1: It is absolutely true that God is not a body; and this can be shown in three ways. First, because no body is in motion unless it be put in motion, as is evident from induction. Now it has already been proved (q.ii, a. 3) that God is the First Mover, and is Himself unmoved. Therefore it is clear that God is not a body. Secondly, because the first being must of necessity be in act, and in no way in potentiality. For although in any single thing that passes from potentiality to actuality, the potentiality is prior in time to the actuality; nevertheless, absolutely speaking, actuality is prior to potentiality; for whatever is in potentiality can be reduced into actuality only by some being in actuality. Now it has been already proved that God is the First Being. It is therefore impossible that in God there should be any potentiality. But every body is in potentiality, because the continuous, as such, is divisible to infinity; it is therefore impossible that God should be a body. Thirdly, because God is the most noble of beings. Now it is impossible for a body to be the most noble of beings; for a body must be either animate or inanimate; and an animate body is manifestly nobler than any inanimate body. But an animate body is

In God no matter exists. As matter is in potentiality and as God is all act, there can be no matter in God.<sup>3</sup>

To explain how it is that God is His essence or nature, St. Thomas says, that in material things the nature or essence differs from the suppositum, because the essence or nature is only that which is included in the definition. But when considering the concrete particular individual of the species, the individuating characteristics and accidental qualities are a part of that thing. Therefore the formal part of material things is individualized by matter. But in things not composed of matter and form, the forms are individualized of themselves, and are subsisting supposita. And in them suppositum and nature are the same. Since God is not composed of matter and form, not animate precisely as body; otherwise all bodies would be animate. Therefore its animation depends on some other thing, as our body depends for its animation on the soul. Hence, that by which a body becomes animated must be nobler than the body. Therefore it is impossible that God should be a body.

<sup>3</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 3, a. 2: It is impossible that matter should exist in God. First, because matter is in potentiality. But we have shown (Q. ii, A. 3) that God is pure act, without any potentiality. Hence it is impossible that God should be composed of matter and form. Secondly, because everything composed of matter and form owes its perfection and goodness to its form: therefore its goodness is participated, inasmuch as matter participates the form. Now the first good and the best--viz., God--is not a participative good, because the essential good is prior to the participated good. Hence it is impossible that God should be composed of matter and form. Thirdly, because every agent acts by its form; hence the manner in which it has form is the manner in which it is an agent. Therefore whatever is primarily and essentially an agent must be primarily and essentially form. Now God is the first agent, since He is the first efficient cause. He is therefore of His essence a form; and not composed of matter and form.

ALSO

Contra Gentiles, Book I, Chapter 17.

He is His own Life and His own Nature, His own Essence, or whatever is predicated of Him.<sup>4</sup>

It is existence which makes a form to be actual. Existence is to essence, as actuality is to potentiality. Since in God there is no potentiality but all actuality, His essence is His existence.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 3, a. 3: God is the same as His essence or nature. To understand this, it must be noted that in things composed of matter and form, the nature or essence must differ from the suppositum, because the essence or nature connotes only what is included in the definition of the species; as, humanity connotes all that is included in the definition of man, for it is by this that man is man, and it is this that humanity signifies, that, namely, whereby man is man. Now the individual matter, with all the individualizing accidents, is not included in the definition of the species. For this particular flesh, these bones, this blackness or whiteness are not included in the definition of a man. Therefore this flesh, these bones and the accidental qualities distinguishing this particular matter, are not included in humanity; and yet they are included in the thing which is a man; hence the thing which is a man has something more in it than has humanity. Consequently humanity and a man are not wholly identical; but humanity is taken to mean the formal part of a man, because the principles whereby a thing is defined are regarded as the formal constituent in regard to the individualizing matter. On the other hand, in things not composed of matter and form, in which individualization is not due to individual matter--that is to say, to this matter--the very forms being individualized of themselves, it is necessary the forms themselves should be subsisting supposita; therefore suppositum and nature in them are identified. Since God then is not composed of matter and form, He must be His own Godhead, His own Life and whatever else is thus predicated of Him.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, q. 3, a. 4: God is not only His own essence, as shown in the preceding article, but also His own existence. This may be shown in several ways. First, whatever a thing has besides its essence must be caused either by the constituent principles of that essence (like a property that necessarily accompanies the species--as the faculty of laughing is proper to a man--and is caused by the constituent of the species), or by some exterior agent--as heat is caused in water by fire. Therefore, if the existence of a thing differs from its essence, this existence must be caused either by some exterior agent or by its essential principles. Now it is impossible for a thing's existence to be caused by its essential constituent principles for nothing can be the sufficient cause of its own existence; if its existence differs from its essence, it must have its existence caused by another. But this cannot be true of God; because we call God the first efficient cause. Therefore it is impossible that in God His existence should differ from His essence. Secondly, existence is that which makes every form or nature actual;

In God there is no composition, either of parts, since He is not a body, or of matter and form, since His nature is not different from His suppositum, or His Essence from His existence, etc. God is no way a composite. As every composite is made up of potentiality and actuality, God is completely simple, being all actuality. In form, as form, there is nothing but that itself. And as God is all form (and no matter) there is nothing but Form itself in God.<sup>6</sup>

for goodness and humanity are spoken of as actual, only because they are spoken of as existing. Therefore, existence must be compared to essence, if the latter is a distinct reality, as actuality to potentiality. Therefore, since in God there is no potentiality as shown above (A. I), it follows that in Him essence does not differ from existence. Therefore, His essence is His existence. Thirdly, because, just as that which has fire, but is not itself fire, is on fire by participation; so that which has existence but is not existence, is a being by participation. But God is His own essence as shown above (A. 3); if, therefore, He is not His own existence He will be not essential, but participated being. He will not therefore be the first being--which is absurd. Therefore God is His own existence, and not merely His own essence.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., I, q. 3, a. 7: The absolute simplicity of God may be shown in many ways. First, from the previous articles of this question. For there is neither composition of quantitative parts in God, since He is not a body; not composition of form and matter; nor does His nature differ from His suppositum; nor His essence from His existence; neither is there in Him composition of genus and difference, not of subject and accident. Therefore, it is clear that God is nowise composite, but is altogether simple. Secondly, every composite is posterior to its component parts, and is dependent on them; but God is the first being as shown above (Q. II, A. 3). Thirdly, because every composite has a cause, for things in themselves different cannot unite unless something to unite. But God is uncaused, as shown above (loc. cit.), since He is the first efficient cause. Fourthly, because in every composite there must be potentiality and actuality; but this does not apply to God; for either one of the parts actuate another, or at least all the parts are potential to the whole. Fifthly, because nothing composite can be predicated of any single one of its parts. And this is evident in a whole made up of dissimilar parts; for no part of a man is a man, nor any of the parts of the foot, a foot. But in wholes made up of similar parts, although something which is predicated of the whole may be predicated of a part (as a part of the air is air, and a part of water, water), nevertheless certain things are predicable of the whole which cannot be predicated of any of the parts; for instance, if the whole volume of water is cubits, no part of it can be two cubits. Thus in every composite there is something which is not it itself.

God is the first principle, the first efficient cause, not material, and first agent in the state of actuality. As such He is not actual, most perfect, because a thing is more perfect as it is more actual. God is all actuality, and therefore perfection itself.<sup>7</sup>

Every agent makes its like, which effect consists in a certain likeness to the agent. Everything (including the agent) seeks its own perfection. Hence both the effect and the cause are desirable and good. God as the first effective agent is desirable and good.<sup>8</sup> But good in God as in the first cause, equivocally, is in Him in the most excellent way. He is supreme Goodness, simply.<sup>9</sup>

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But, even if this could be said of whatever has a form, viz., that it has something which is not it itself, as in a white object there is something which is not of the essence of white; nevertheless in the form itself, there is nothing besides itself. And so, since God is absolute form, or rather absolute being, He can be in no way composite...

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., I, q. 4, a. 1: ...The first active principle must needs be most actual, and therefore most perfect; for a thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality, because we call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., I, q. 6, a. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., I, q. 6, a. 2: God is the supreme good simply, and not only as existing in any genus or order of things. For good is attributed to God, as was said in the preceding article, inasmuch as all desired perfections flow from Him as from the first cause. They do not, however, flow from Him as from a univocal agent, as shown above (Q. IV, A. 2); but as from an agent which does not agree with its effects either in species or genus. Now the likeness of an effect in the univocal cause is found uniformly; but in the equivocal cause it is found more excellently, as, heat is in the sun more excellently than it is in fire. Therefore as good is in God as in the first, but not the univocal, cause of all things, it must be in Him in a most excellent way; and therefore He is called the supreme good.



As St. Augustine says, because God is Good, we are. God is present in all things, not really, but virtually, as it were, as the **cause** of their being. And not only as the cause of their origin, but as the sustaining and governing cause of their continuance in being.<sup>10</sup>

Since change is the motion of going from potentiality to actuality, it is a kind of imperfect act, as it were. As God is all act there is no further act for Him to reach. He is all perfection, and needs nothing more to perfect Himself. Therefore God is immutable, and unchanging.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., I, q. 8, a. 1: God is in all things, not, indeed, as part of their essence, nor as an accident; but as an agent is present to that upon which it works. For an agent must be joined to that wherein it acts immediately, and touch it by its power; hence it is proved in Physic vii that the thing moved and the mover must be joined together. Now since God is very being by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect; as to ignite is the proper effect of fire. Now God **causes** this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being; light is caused in the air by the sun as long as the air remains illuminated. Therefore as long as a thing has being, God must be present to it, according to its mode of being. But being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally inherent in all things since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing, as was shown above (2, VII, A. I). Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermost.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., I, q. 9, a. 2: God alone is altogether immutable; whereas, every creature is in some way mutable....(Thus) in every creature there is a potentiality to change either as regards substantial being as in the case of things corruptible; or as regards local only, as is the case of the celestial bodies; or as regards the order to their end, and the application of their powers to divers objects, as is the case with the **angels**; and universally all creatures generally are mutable by the power of the Creator, in Whose power is their existence and non-existence. Hence since God is in none of these ways mutable, it belongs to Him alone to be altogether immutable.

Because God is immutable, He is eternal, the idea of eternity following on that of immutability. From the notion of time, which is the numbering of movement by before and after, we can attain to the notion of eternity, which consists in the uniformity of what is outside of movement. Thus eternity can be known as that which has no beginning, nor end, and as that which has no succession, or is simultaneously whole.<sup>12</sup>

God is one. St. Thomas proves the unity of God from His simplicity, from the infinity of His perfection, and from the ordered unity of things in the universe.<sup>13</sup>

From our sense knowledge of the things in the universe we rise to the knowledge of that which is their cause. From the effect we can reach the

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<sup>12</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 10, a. 2: The idea of eternity follows immutability, as the idea of time follows movement...Hence, as God is supremely immutable, it supremely belongs to Him to be eternal. Nor is He eternal only; but He is His own eternity; whereas no other being is its own duration, as no other is its own being. Now God is His own uniform being; and hence, as He is His own essence, so He is His own eternity.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., I, q. 11, a. 3: ...God Himself is His own nature...Therefore, in the very same way God is God, and He is this God. Impossible is it therefore that many Gods should exist.

...God comprehends in Himself the whole perfection of being. If then many gods existed, they would necessarily differ from each other. Something therefore would belong to one, which did not belong to another. And if this were a privation one of them would not be absolutely perfect; but if a perfection, one of them would be without it. So it is impossible for many gods to exist...

All things that exist are seen to be ordered to each other since some serve others. But things that are diverse do not harmonize in the same order, unless they are ordered thereto by one. For many are reduced into one order by one better than by many; because one is the per se cause of one, and many are only the accidental cause of one, inasmuch as they are in some way one. Since therefore what is first is most perfect, and is so per se and not accidentally, it must be that the first which reduces all into one order should be only one. And this one is God.

cause, but imperfectly only, because the cause is not an univocal one. St. Thomas says that we can know God by remotion and analogously.<sup>14</sup>

Our way of knowing things is imperfect and inferior, but in God, knowledge is perfect, His Being is His knowledge. God is truth.<sup>15</sup> His knowledge is one, immediate, perfect, complete, of all things, and is Himself.<sup>16</sup> It is God's knowledge that is the cause of things. All things are first in the mind of God. In that sense, He is considered as the Exemplary cause. Inas-

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., I, q. 12, a. 12: Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our mind cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God as their cause. Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His essence be seen. But because they are His effects and depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God whether He exists, and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him.

Hence we know that His relationship with creatures so far as to be the cause of ~~them~~ all; also that creatures differ from Him, inasmuch as He is not in any way part of what is caused by Him; and that creatures are not removed from Him by reason of any defect on His part, but because He superexceeds them all.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., I, q. 14, a. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., I, q. 14, a. 1: In God there exists the most perfect knowledge. ...The idea of the thing known is in the knower...Forms according as they are the more immaterial, approach more nearly to a kind of infinity. Therefore it is clear that the immateriality of a thing is the reason why it is cognitive; and according to the mode of immateriality is the mode of knowledge. Hence it is said that plants do not know, because they are wholly material. But sense is cognitive because it can receive images free from matter, and the intellect is still further cognitive, because it is more separated from matter and unmixed...Since therefore God is in the highest degree of immateriality,...it follows that He occupies the highest place in knowledge.

(Ibid., q. 14, a. 4)...In God, intellect, and the object understood, and the intelligible species, and His act of understanding are entirely one and the same. Hence, when God is said to be understanding, no kind of multiplicity is attached to His substance.

far as they really exist, He is their First Efficient cause.<sup>17</sup>

As the intellect judges a thing to be good, it is desirable, and the will is inclined thereto, in order to possess it. Now in God the object of His Intellect is Himself, is Truth itself, and as the perfect Good, according to our mode of understanding, desirable to Him. And so as perfect, complete Goodness, God Himself, is the object of His desire, and He loves Himself. We say that because of our defective intellection in composing the two ideas, whereas in God, He is Himself, Love, in one act. Because God is Good, we are. His Intellect and His Will together are the cause of things.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 14, a. 8: The knowledge of God is the cause of things. For the knowledge of God is to all creatures what the knowledge of the artificer is to things made by his art. Now the knowledge of the artificer is the cause of the things made by his art from the fact that the artificer works by his intellect. Hence the form of the intellect must be the principle of action...Now it is manifest that God causes things by His intellect, since His being is His act of understanding; and hence His knowledge must be the cause of things, in so far as His will is joined to it. Hence the knowledge of God as the cause of things is usually called the knowledge of approbation.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., I, q. 19, a. 4: ...The will of God is the cause of things; and He acts by His will, and not...by a necessity of His nature...Since both intellect and nature act for an end...the natural agent must have the end and the necessary means predetermined for it by some higher intellect...Hence the intellectual and voluntary agent must precede the agent that acts by nature. Hence, since God is the first in the order of agents, He must act by intellect and will...He does not, therefore, act by a necessity of His nature, but determined effects proceed from His own infinite perfection according to the determination of His will and intellect.

...Effects proceed from the agent that causes them, in as far as they pre-exist in the agent; since every agent produces its like. Now effects pre-exist in their cause after the mode of the cause. Wherefore since the Divine Being is His own intellect, effects pre-exist in Him after the mode of intellect, and therefore proceed from Him after the same mode. Consequently, they proceed from Him after the mode of will, for His inclination to put in act what His intellect has conceived appertains to the will. Therefore the will of God is the cause of things.

God acts by His intellect and His will. As the exemplary cause, the first, efficient cause, He is the Creator of everything that is not Himself. Creation is the proper act of God.<sup>19</sup>

Above primary matter, above all being, and above becoming, God Is.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., I, q. 45, a. 1: We must consider not only the emanation of a particular thing from a particular agent, but the emanation of all being from the universal cause, which is God; and this emanation we designate by the name of creation. Now what proceeds by particular emanation is not presupposed to that emanation; as when a man is generated, he was not before, but man is made from not-man, and white from not-white. Hence if the emanation of the whole universal being from the first principle be considered, it is impossible that any being should be presupposed before this emanation. For nothing is the same as no thing. Therefore as the generation of a man is from the not-being which is not-man, so creation, which is the emanation of all being, is from the not-being which is nothing.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., I. q. 14, a. 11: This name, HE WHO IS, is most properly applied to God for three reasons:

First, because of its signification. For it does not signify form, but simply existence itself. Hence since the existence of God is His essence itself, which can be said of no other (Q. III, A. 4), it is clear that among other names this one specially denominates God, for everything is denominated by its form.

Secondly, on account of its universality. For all other names are either less universal, or, if convertible with it, add something above it at least in idea; hence in a certain way they inform and determine it. Now our intellect cannot know the essence of God itself in this life, as it is in itself, but whatever mode it applies in determining what it understands about God, it falls short of the mode of what God is in Himself. Therefore the less determinate the names are, and the more universal and absolute they are, the more properly are they applied to God. Hence Damascene says (De Fid. Orth. 1) that, HE WHO IS, is the principal applied to God; for comprehending all in itself, it contains existence itself as an infinite and indeterminate sea of substance. Now by any other name some mode of substance is determined, whereas this name HE WHO IS, determines no mode of being, but is indeterminate to all; and therefore it denominates the infinite ocean of substance.

Thirdly, from its consignification, for it signifies present existence; and this above all properly applies to God, whose existence knows not past or future, as Augustine says (De Trin. v).

God is the First cause and the Final end of all things.<sup>21</sup> All which is not God has being only by participation. Between God and creatures there is an infinite **disproportion**. Because He is Being, per se, God alone can create beings.<sup>22</sup> It is He Who has made, ex nihilo, all that is not He--even matter. The cause of beings, considered not only as such beings, by their accidental forms, nor as these beings, by their substantial forms, but also considering whatever belongs to beings in any way at all, is the universal cause, and that cause is God.<sup>23</sup>

It might be well here to consider the meaning of life as it is attributed to God. Man being a living thing knows in a limited way, what it is to live. It is not difficult to appreciate the possibility of the existence of beings possessing life in a more immanent way. And so of God, we can say that He

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., I, q. 44, a. 4: Every agent acts for an end: otherwise one thing would not follow more than another from the action of the agent, unless it were by chance. Now the end of the agent and of the patient considered as such is the same, but in a different way respectively. For the impression which the agent intends to produce, and which the patient intends to receive, are one and the same. Some things, however, are both agent and patient at the same time. These are imperfect agents, and to these it belongs to intend, even while acting, the acquisition of something. But it does not belong to the First Agent, Who is agent only, to act for the acquisition of some end; He intends only to communicate His perfection, which is His goodness; while every creature intends to acquire its own perfection, which is the likeness of the divine perfection and goodness. Therefore the divine goodness is the end of all things.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., I, q. 44, a. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 44, a. 2.

ALSO

Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. VI.

ALSO

Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. XXI.

is Life at its fullest, best, and most perfect.<sup>24</sup>

### THE ANGELS

The next in order which St. Thomas considers, in the Summa Theologica, after God, are the purely spiritual creatures, called angels. He elucidates what concerns their substance, their intellect, their will, and their creation

There must be some incorporeal creatures, because God intended good in creatures, which good consists primarily in assimilation to Himself. That can best be accomplished when the effect most nearly imitates the cause by which it was produced. As God creates beings by His intellect and will, there must be intellectual beings. Because intelligence, as such, is not the action of a body, as **such**, there must be intellectual creatures, that are incorporeal.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 18, a. 3: Life is in the highest degree properly in God...Since a thing is said to live in so far as it operates of itself, and not as moved by another, the more perfectly this power is found in anything, the more perfect is the life of that thing.

...Although our intellect moves itself to some things, yet others are supplied by nature, as are first principles, which it cannot doubt; and the last end, which it cannot but will. Hence, although with respect to some things it moves itself, yet with regard to other things it must be moved by another. Wherefore that being whose act of understanding is its very nature, and which, in what it naturally possesses, is not determined by another, must have life in the most perfect degree. Such is God; and hence in Him principally is life...

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., I, q. 50, a. 1

### ALSO

Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. XCI: Now all possible natures are found in the order of things: otherwise the universe would be imperfect. Moreover in everlasting things there is no difference between actual and possible being. Therefore there are some substances subsistent, apart from a body, below the first substance which is God, Who is no genus, as we proved above; and above the soul which is united to a body.

From its operation of intellection, the mode of its substance must be immaterial, for the act of understanding is immaterial in the knower, as well as in the thing known. But because a thing is understood, not according to its manner of being, but according to the manner of being of the one who does the understanding, angels as they exist in themselves, are not the proper object of our knowledge but we know them according to our way of understanding, which is, of composite things.<sup>26</sup>

The angels are not simple beings, however, because they are incorporeal. It is true that they are not composed of matter and form, but they are composites of essence and existence. Their essence is as potency to their existence, because they are not necessary beings.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Summa Theologica, I, q. 50, a. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., rep. obj. 3.

ALSO

De Spir. Creat. Art. 1, p. 310, col. 2, upper half: For although in one and the same thing which is now in act, now in potency, potency is prior in time to act; nevertheless, act is naturally prior to potency. But that which is prior does not depend on "a posteriori" but just the other way around. And so, a certain pure act is found without any potency whatever; and therefore there is always, in prime matter, some form. But by the first perfect act simply, which has in itself all plenitude of perfection is caused the actual being in all things; but, nevertheless, according to a certain order. For no caused act has the entire plenitude of perfection, but in respect to the First Act, every caused act is imperfect; the more perfect the act is, the closer it is to God. Among all creatures spiritual substances most closely approach God as is apparent through Dionysius, IV Chap. "Coelstis Hierar" when they most closely come to the perfection of the First Act, since they are compared to lesser creatures as perfect to imperfect, and as act to potency. Therefore by no means does this way of the order of things hold that spiritual substances require, for their being, prime matter, which is the most incomplete among all beings; but they (spiritual substances) are far elevated above all matter and all material things.



The number of the angels is legion. Because they are more perfect, and perfection of the universe is the intention of God, their number is so much the greater than, and far exceeds the number of, lesser creatures.<sup>28</sup>

Each angel is its own species. In material things, the form is contracted by matter, so that there may be many individuals of the same species, but in immaterial things, the form itself is individualized. God intended specific multiplication, and not numerical, an inferior kind of multiplication. The multiplication of the species of angels, then, is perfection of a sort.<sup>29</sup>

From their immateriality follows their incorruptibility, as corruption is the separation of the form from matter. Since an angel is a subsisting form, without matter, and since whatever belongs to a thing considered in itself, cannot be taken from it, the being of the angel, as form, cannot be taken from it, and therefore there can be no corruption.<sup>30</sup>

Since only God is pure act, an angel's act of understanding is not his substance but his movement. Movement is not existence, but follows from existence. His understanding, his knowledge, is intellectual only. Because he has no body, he can have no sentient knowledge. His knowledge, then, is not, in part, sensory, as ours is, but wholly intellectual.

Although the angel can understand all things, he does not do so by his essence, but rather through his essence. His intellect must be perfected by

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<sup>28</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 50, a. 3.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., I, q. 50, a. 4.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., I, q. 50, a. 5.

some species which are connatural to him. An angel attains his intelligible perfection from the intelligible species which he receives from God, together with his intellectual nature. God knows all things by His own essence. An angel knows by many forms what God knows by one, Himself.<sup>31</sup>

The inclination toward the good, which follows the knowledge of the good, is will. By his intellect an angel knows the good, and is inclined thereto. His will is distinguished from his intellect; only in God is intellect and will one with His being. The intellect, as a faculty, has within it, in some way, what is outside of itself; the will, as a faculty, tends, or is inclined to, what is outside of itself. So it is clear that in an angel they must be different.<sup>32</sup>

The natural inclination of an angel's will toward the good is its natural appetite, and that is love. This love is a natural love, although it is at the same time intellectual, because an angel is sometimes called an intelligence.<sup>33</sup>

God is the ultimate end of the angels, as of all things. The attainment of that end was to be accomplished by the exercise of his will. The object of his beatitude, God, is beyond an angel's natural power, so that (probably) by grace, he merited beatitude. The angels who did not merit beatitude failed by omitting to incline their will toward God.

God alone is His own existence. In everything else essence differs

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<sup>31</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 55, a. 2.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., I, q. 59, a. 2.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., I, q. 60, a. 1.

from existence. All other things than God have their existence by participation, and are caused--come into being--by that which exists essentially. Therefore, the angels were made by God.<sup>34</sup>

Higher, then, than corporeal beings, and without matter, but comprising essence (form), and existence, are the angels. Their essence (what they are) is in potency to their actual existence. They are immaterial, incorporeal, spiritual beings, with an intellectual nature. They are not pure form or act, because their form is in potency to their existence. They are, therefore, composite, contingent, created beings.

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<sup>34</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 61, a. 1.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE NATURE OF MAN

There is, then an hierarchy of beings, starting from one point of view, with Prime Matter, which is not, strictly speaking, being, but only the potentiality of being, and which, by being united with various forms of increasing complexity, makes corporeal beings, the zenith and acme of which is found in Man. The form of man, the highest of corporeal forms, the soul, is at one and the same time a principle of intellection. It is, however, the lowest in the order of intelligences, starting with God, Whose Pure Intelligence is His Being, down through the angels, who are immaterial intelligences. The essence of man includes matter. His intellect is but a principle of intellection. He is able, by dint of great effort, to abstract the intelligible from material things, but only by discursive reasoning, and not by intuition.<sup>1</sup>

Man thinks and wills. He conceives the absolute, the necessary, the immutable, the eternal, the divine, and he loves them. Here at this point Nature would seem to have made a sudden leap, as it were.

The ancient philosophers afforded Saint Thomas an opportunity to show that there is wondrous gradation in forms.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>De Ente et Essentia, Ch. IV.

<sup>2</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. 89: ...Since,...everything moved, as such, tends, as towards a Divine likeness, to be perfect in itself; and since a thing is perfect in so far as it becomes actual: it follows that the intention of every thing that is in potentiality is to tend to actuality by way of movement. Consequently the more an act is posterior and perfect, the more the appetite of matter is inclined thereto. Therefore the appetite whereby matter seeks a form, must tend towards the last and most perfect act to which

Although form had always been associated with matter, Saint Thomas undertook to indigitate that there is no reason why a form could not be also a principle of intellection; and that is what he demonstrated the soul of man to be, namely, the form of the body, which at the same time, is a principle of intellection.<sup>3</sup>

can attain, as to the ultimate end of generation. Now certain grades are to be found in the acts of forms. The Primary Matter is in potentiality first of all to the elemental form. While under the elemental form, it is in potentiality to the form of a mixed body: wherefore elements are the matter of a mixed body. Considered as under the form of a mixed body, it is in potentiality to a vegetative soul: where the act of such a body is a soul. Again, the vegetative soul is in potentiality to the sensitive, and the sensitive to the intellective. This is proved by the process of generation: for in generation we have first the foetus living with a plant life, afterwards with animal life, and lastly with human life. After this no later or more noble form is to be found in things subject to generation and corruption. Therefore the last end of all generation is the human soul, and to this does matter tend as to its ultimate form. Consequently the elements are for the sake of the mixed body, and mixed body for the sake of living things: and of these plants are for the sake of animals and animals for the sake of man. Therefore man is the end of all generation. And whereas the same thing is the cause of generation and preservation of things, the order of the preservation of things is in keeping with the aforesaid order of their generation. Hence we find that mixed bodies are preserved by the qualities becoming to the elements: plants are nourished by mixed bodies; animals derive their nourishment from plants; and some that are more perfect and powerful from the imperfect and weak. Man employs all kinds of things for his own use: some for food, some for clothing. Hence by nature he was made naked as being able to make himself clothes from other things; even as nature provided him with no becoming nourishment except milk, so that he might supply himself with food from a variety of things. Some he employs as a means of transit: for he is inferior to many animals in swiftness and sustaining power, as though other animals were furnished for his needs. And over and above he employs all things endowed with a sensitive life for the perfection of his intellectual knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>A. C. Pegis, St. Thomas and the Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century, Toronto, Canada, St. Michael's College, 1934.

To know Man, who is the union of body and soul, we have inquired into the meaning of Matter and Form, the two component elements of all corporeal substances.

The formal principle gives its specific being to the corporeal subject. It is matter that individualizes the species. Matter is the "principle of individuation. In order to separate, in a sensible manner, one individual from another, matter offers its divisible extension and its dimensions, which can be delimited or divided. Thus the subject is presented as individualized by the quantity of extension, which determines it and distinguishes it, which posits it in space, and in time. Hence should it vary by increase or decrease, that change would not impair its individuality. The latter remains the same as in living beings, which, without dividing, grow or diminish. But if, on the other hand, a quantity is divided in several parts, the first individual is thus replaced by several individual subjects; in other words, the form is multiplied into several individual forms.

Human nature does not consist only in the soul of man. The soul alone does not form the complete species. It is only one of its essential parts. As in all material things the definition includes the matter as well as the form.<sup>4</sup> The individual is the entire subsisting integral nature. Therefore the soul is not man. It is not a complete substance, but only a part of the individual subject.

By essence, the soul is endowed with an aptitude for uniting with matter. Consequently--even separated from the body--it does not have the

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<sup>4</sup>De Ente et Essentia, Ch. II:...It is clear that the essence is what is signified by the definition of a thing. But the definition of material substances contains not only the form, but also the matter....

complete individuality of a man. In that state, it does not warrant bearing the title of person. If that were true, its union with the body would be accidental. Therefore the human soul is only the specific principle, and not the one of individuation. It is an incomplete substance. It follows that it is the other constituent element which is the principle of individuation in the human subject. It is by its union with that element, that is, with the matter of the body, that the soul attains the same individual characteristic as the entire man.

However, the integral being of the soul cannot be communicated to the body because the latter is incapable of receiving it. Nothing material can participate in what is the source of intellectual life in the soul. Such a condition would be contradictory. However, the soul can, without dividing, communicate its actuality, its being, to the matter of the body, in all the proportion to which matter can be elevated to the participation in the essential dignity of the soul, and that, without the human soul's having the necessity, nor even the possibility, of giving to it in common what relates to intellectual life proper.

The formal and the material fuse in one essence. The human being is the result of that fusion. Every part of the body, thus formed, participates in the same essence, in the same nature, in the same being, as the entire body. Otherwise, the compound would not be one identical substance, but only an aggregate of substances, agglomerated accidentally, like a house. Therefore, the substantial form is in every part of the body, as well as in the whole. In forming the whole, it forms also its parts. It must be remembered

that the whole is not a simple assemblage of parts already constituted, but a subject existing in itself with all its parts. Moreover, the form, principle of unity in the body, must be one in itself. Where the form is, by its essence, it is there entirely. To detach a part of it would be to change its nature. To illustrate, the soul of the animal deprived of sensibility and reduced to a vegetative form would be nothing more than a vegetative soul. The human soul despoiled of intellectuality would not be the soul of a man. Therefore, by its essence, the substantial form gives to the body its specific nature. However, it does not confer that gift upon the body from without. It is, as well as matter, the intrinsic and constitutive principle of the corporeal thing. It is an essential part of the composite being.<sup>5</sup> The substantial form is entirely in each part of the body and in all the body, since it is from the soul that the corporeal whole and all its parts derive their specific nature. But that essential and existing integrality is one of perfection and not of a quantitative totality. That integral perfection is not measurable by an entirety of place or of corporeal quantity. Likewise for all forms of substances, organic or inorganic. Therefore, it is entirely, that the human soul, actually existing, by its essence, is in each part of the body as in the whole body.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Quaes. Disp. de Anima, Art. 10, p. 412, col. 2, lower half: It is not possible that something receive being and species from something separated, as from a form; for this would be similar to the position of the platonists, who maintained that these kinds of sensible things received being and species through the participation in separated forms; but it is fitting that a form be something of that to which it gives being. The form and matter are principles intrinsically constituting the essence of the thing.

<sup>6</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 8, art. 2, rep. obj. 3: A whole is so called with reference to its parts. Now part is two-fold: viz., a part of the



Saint Thomas achieved the remarkable feat of synthesizing the two diametrically opposed positions of the Platonic tradition and of the Aristotelian tradition. He was faced with the problem of harmonizing, on the one hand, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and on the other hand, of insuring the unity of man. The Platonic philosophy could easily maintain the dogma of the immortality of the soul, with its definition of man, as a soul using a body; but that tenet jeopardized the unity of being in man. The Aristotelian philosophy could easily account for the unity of man, by making the soul the form of the body; but in this case, form, being associated with matter, is not considered as self-subsistent. By his remarkable appreciation of gradation of forms, and of the gradation of intellectual substances, Saint Thomas was able to recognize the overlapping and uniting into one, of the two orders in the intellectual soul of man. By doing so, he insured the dogma of the immortality of the soul and was able to explain at the same time

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essence, as the form and the matter are called parts of the composite, while genus and difference are called parts of the species. There is also part of quantity, into which any quantity is divided. What therefore is whole in any place by totality of quantity, cannot be outside of that place, because the quantity of anything placed is commensurate to the quantity of the place; and hence there is no totality of quantity without totality of place. But totality of essence is not commensurate to the totality of place. Hence it is not necessary for that which is whole by totality of essence in a thing, not to be at all outside of it. This appears also in accidental forms, which have accidental quantity; as an example, whiteness is whole in each part of the surface if we speak of its totality of essence; because according to the perfect idea of its species, it is found to exist in every part of the surface. But if its totality be considered according to quantity which it has accidentally, then it is not whole in every part of the surface. On the other hand incorporeal substances have no totality either of themselves or accidentally, except in reference to the perfect idea of their essence. Hence as the soul is whole in every part of the body, so is God whole in all things and in each one.

by upholding the unity of man, the phenomenon of sensation, which had never been satisfactorily explained by the Platonists.<sup>7</sup>

After having reviewed the various systems of Plato, Aristotle, and others, Saint Thomas concludes with Aristotle in the following manner:<sup>8</sup> when the soul unites with the body, it does not cease to be the master of its own being, by communicating it. The being wherein that composite subsists is the same for the matter, as for the form. That common being, matter cannot give it; it can only receive it by the form. Matter receives that common being from a principle which has sufficient being to subsist in itself. The soul does not lose itself in giving itself. The human soul, al-

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<sup>7</sup>Pegis, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 76, a. 1: There remains, therefore, no other explanation than that given by Aristotle--namely, that this particular man understands, because the intellectual principle is his form. Thus from the very operation of the intellect it is made clear that the intellectual principle is united to the body as its form.

The same can be clearly shown from the nature of the human species. For the nature of each thing is shown by its operation. Now the proper operation of man as man is to understand; because he thereby surpasses all other animals. Whence Aristotle concludes (*Thic.* x, 7) that the ultimate happiness of man must consist in this operation as properly belonging to him. Man must therefore derive his species from that which is the principle of this operation. But the species of anything is derived from its form. It follows therefore that the intellectual principle is the proper form of man.

But we must observe that the nobler a form is, the more it rises above corporeal matter, the less it is merged in matter, and the more it excels matter by its power and its operation; hence we find that the form of a mixed body has another operation not **caused** by its elemental qualities. And the higher we advance in the nobility of forms, the more we find that the power of the form excels the elementary matter; as the vegetative soul excels the form of the metal, and the sensitive soul excels the vegetative soul. Now the human soul is the highest and noblest of forms. Wherefore it excels corporeal matter in its power by the fact that it has an operation and a power in which corporeal matter has no share whatever. This power is called the intellect.

though an intellectual substance informs the material element, and makes that part subsist in it and by it. The result is unity of substance.<sup>9</sup>

The two problems, namely, the union of the soul and the body, and the unity of man, may be solved by interrelating them. If the soul were not the form but only the mover of the body, there could be several souls in the same body. In that case, man would be merely a collection of substances associated together. He would be a machine in which diverse moving forces would give impulsion to diverse organs. But if the soul in man is the form of the body which it animates, there exists in the human composite but one soul.<sup>10</sup>

Man is a composite being, but only one being, formed by the union of matter with a substantial principle. The human substance is the human body and the human soul which vivifies the body, feels and thinks with it. Man

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<sup>9</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. LXVIII: For one thing to be another's substantial form, two conditions are required. One of them is that the form be the principle of substantial being to the thing of which it is the form: and I speak not of the effective but of the formal principle, whereby a thing is, and is called a being. Hence follows the second condition, namely that the form and matter combine together in one being, which is not the case with the effective principle together with that to which it gives being. This is the being in which a composite substance subsists, which is one in being, and consists of matter and form. Now an intellectual substance, as proved above is not hindered by the fact that it is subsistent, from being the formal principle of being to matter, as communicating its being to matter. For it is not unreasonable that the composite and its form itself should subsist in the same being, since the composite exists only by the form, nor does either subsist apart from the other.

<sup>10</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 76, a. 3: We must therefore conclude that in man the sensitive soul, the intellectual soul, and the nutritive soul are numerically one soul. This can easily be explained, if we consider the differences of species and forms. For we observe that the species and the forms of things differ from one another, as the perfect and the imperfect; as in the order of things, the animate are more perfect than the inanimate, and animals more perfect than plants, and man then brute animals; and in each of these genera there are various degrees.

is not an intellectual soul using an organized body; but is a body existing, living, feeling, by a soul endowed with reason and will.

In any part of the body, only one soul is possible, since only one substantial form is admissible in one part of matter, and if several souls were distributed in several organs, **each** of those organs would be an animated being. The human composite then, would not be one being only, but a group of several animated beings.

The human soul occupies an eminent place in the hierarchy of beings. Man is an animal, and the soul which is the principle of his sensible life must enjoy a perfection at least equal to that of all other animals. Now, to sense supposes a soul which is not matter, although it may depend on matter, to the point of existing only in matter, and acting only with matter. Man's soul then is not matter, but is the form of matter, that is, the actualization of matter.

Therefore such a soul gives to matter a formal determination, but in itself, the soul is not material, since the soul is act, and matter is only potency. From another point of view, it can have no matter in its constitution, for if it had, it would already be a complete substance and would need nothing more. It would previously have been united to matter, to animate another body would be superfluous.

If the soul has no matter, it follows that it is not a body. All bodies are material. Also, the soul is not extended, because matter that is the source of extension. On the contrary, if matter were to be attributed to the soul, we would have to say that the soul is a body and extended.

The essence of the soul, considered as being able to be, is not matter. It is the very form of the soul which is completed by the actual existence of the compound being. If that existence could be withdrawn, it would not be by a transmutation, nor by a change of specific form that it would lose its actual being.

The soul is an immaterial form and always remains so by its very nature. It cannot exist however, without composition of potency and act. Nevertheless, the soul is essentially simple. It is not twofold in its essence, but in spite of its simplicity of nature, it can exist actually, only if it be given its being.<sup>11</sup>

The soul, then, must be eminently simple in its essence, not composed of matter and form. It is entirely form--entirely immaterial. However, the soul is not a perfect act. Created subjects are more or less capable of approaching their own limited perfection by potencies of perfections which are not their very essence, but which flow from their essence.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 75, a. 5: ...We may proceed from the specific notion of the human soul, inasmuch as it is intellectual. For it is clear that whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the recipient. Now a thing is known in as far as its form is in the knower. But the intellectual soul knows a stone absolutely as a stone; and therefore the form of a stone absolutely, as to its proper formal idea, is in the intellectual soul. Therefore the intellectual soul itself is an absolute form, and not something composed of matter and form. For if the intellectual soul were composed of matter and form, the forms of things would be received into it as individuals, and so it would only know the individual: just as it happens with the sensitive powers which receive forms in a corporeal organ; since matter is the principle by which forms are individualized. It follows, therefore, that the intellectual soul, and every intellectual substance, which has knowledge of forms absolutely, is exempt from composition of matter and form.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., I, q. 77: It is impossible to admit that the power of the soul is its essence, although some have maintained it. For the present purpose this may be proved in two ways. First, because, since **power** and act divide

Man has, therefore, a soul of a superior nature, a soul truly spiritual, in other words, a spiritual form. Simplicity and spirituality, consequently, are two of its fundamental characteristics.

If by "simplicity" be understood the absolute absence of composition of any sort, then, the soul of man is not worthy of being called simple. God alone has such perfect simplicity. He alone is All Act and Pure Act. In the human soul there is to be distinguished potency and act. In its essence it is simple, but it is able to be. The soul has not an absolute necessity of existing. Everything other than God is a creature. For the soul to be, actually, it is necessary that the existence complete the possibility of its nature. Hence, the existing soul remains a composite of possibility and actuality, of essence and existence.<sup>13</sup>

being and every kind of being, we must refer a power and its act to the same genus. Therefore, if the act be not in the genus of substance, the power directed to that act cannot be in the genus of substance. Now the operation of the soul is not in the genus of substance; for this belongs to God alone, whose operation is His own substance. Wherefore the Divine Power which is the principle of His operation is the Divine Essence itself. This cannot be true either of the soul, or of any creature; as we have said above when speaking of the angels (Q. Liv. A. 3). Secondly, this may be also shown to be impossible in the soul. For the soul by its very essence is an act. Therefore if the very essence of the soul were the immediate principle of operation, whatever has a soul would always have actual vital actions, as that which has a soul is always an actually living thing. For as a form the soul is not an act ordained to a further act, but the ultimate term of generation. Wherefore, for it to be in potentiality to another act, does not belong to it according to its essence as a form, but according to its power. So the soul itself, as the subject of its power, is called the first act, with a further relation to the second act. Now we observe that what has a soul is not always actual with respect to its vital operations; whence also it is said in the definition of the soul, that it is the act of a body having life potentially; which potentiality, however, does not exclude the soul. Therefore it follows that the essence of the soul is not its power. For nothing is in potentiality by reason of an act, as act.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., I, q. 90, a. 1, rep. obj. 2: Although the soul is a simple form by its essence, yet it is not its own existence, but is a being by participation.

Its simplicity is not the exclusive privilege of the human soul. Every principle of life possesses it by the fact that it is form giving vital being to a material body. If a body is living, it is not because it is body (since there are bodies which are not living) but because it has a form which is the fundamental principle of vital actions.

We may therefore conclude that the human soul has that degree of immateriality which we call simplicity; that is, not being matter, it is not made up of parts. It is a non-extended form. It is without matter in its essence, but that simplicity is not sufficient to distinguish the human soul from inferior souls, nor even from the forms of non-living bodies. All forms of substance are without matter, per se, although such forms may be united to matter to the extent of having actual reality only in matter.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Q. D. de Anima, Art. VI, body, p. 391, col. 2, upper half: For first, because the form, coming to the matter, constitutes the species. If, therefore, the soul be composed of matter and form, from the very union of the form to the matter of the soul would be constituted a certain species in the world of nature. For whatever is species, is not united to another to constitute a species, unless the other thing is corrupted (i. e. loses its identity) in some way; as elements are united to compose the species of a mixed thing. Therefore the soul would not be united to the body to constitute the human species; but, the whole human species would consist in the soul, which is obviously false because if the body did not pertain the species of man, it would come to the body accidentally. But it cannot be said that according to this, the hand is not composed of matter and form, because it has not the complete species, but it is part of a species; for it is evident that the matter of the hand is not perfected by its form separately; but there is one form which simultaneously perfects the matter of the whole body and all its parts; which could not be said of the soul if it were composed of matter and form. For first it would be fitting that the matter of the soul would be perfected in the order of nature by its form and afterwards the body would be perfected by the soul; unless perhaps someone should say that the matter of the soul be some part of corporeal matter; which is quite absurd. Likewise the first position is shown to be impossible from this that in everything composed of matter and form, the matter is that which receives being, not however as that by which something is; for this is proper to the form. If therefore the soul be composed of matter and form, it is impossible that the soul be by itself alone the formal principle of being (existence) to the body. Therefore the

The soul, then, is not a body. The soul is immaterial; it is form, and form of the human substance. The soul is the substantial form of the body, since by human unity, the material body is one substantial composite with the formal soul.<sup>15</sup>

Man has in his complex nature all the perfections of inferior natures and surpasses them by the intellectuality of his soul. However, in man alone is found, simultaneously, corporeity, life, sensation and reason. He is therefore constituted of prime matter with only one substantial form, the principle of life, of sensation, and of reason. The body is, as much as the soul, an essential part of that being which is man--who is a unique substance.

soul would not be the form of the body but something of the soul. But whatever it is that is the form of this body is the soul. The soul, therefore, is not that which was placed (put), as a composite of matter and form, but only its form. It would also appear that this is impossible for another reason. For if the soul is composed of matter and form, and, also the body, then each of them would have of itself its own unity; and so it would be necessary to have some third thing by which the soul would be united to the body.

<sup>15</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 76, a. 1: We must assert that the intellect which is the principle of intellectual operation is the form of the human body. For that whereby anything primarily acts is a form of the thing to which the act is to be attributed: for instance, that whereby a body is primarily healed is health, and that whereby the soul knows primarily is knowledge; hence health is a form of the body, and knowledge is a form of the soul. The reason is because nothing acts except so far as it is in act. Now it is clear that the first thing by which the body lives is the soul. And as life appears through various operations in different degrees of living things, that whereby we primarily perform each of all these vital actions is the soul. For the soul is the primary principle of our nourishment, sensation, and local movement; and likewise of our understanding. Therefore, this principle by which we primarily understand whether it be called the intellect or the intellectual soul, is the form of the body.



But the soul, precisely as the principle of intellectual operation, is the form of the human body.<sup>16</sup>

To live, to feel, to think, are fundamental acts. Therefore, if man who thinks is really an animated body, it is necessary that the same principle, which animates the human body, be not only vegetative and sensitive, but at the same time endowed with intelligence. The body is an essential part of man since it must necessarily cooperate in the act of sensing. Therefore, thought is the action of this corporeal being, and consequently, the thinking soul is the very soul which forms the human body and animates it. Since the soul is an element of the substance, and since every substance is absolutely one, there cannot be in the matter of the animated body any other form of substance than the soul. It becomes necessary that the soul in man be capable of carrying on the superior activity of intellection.

The soul is analagous to geometrical figures which become more and more complex in such a way that the following one contains virtually the simpler one preceding it; the triangle contains the angle, the quadrangle contains the triangle, the pentagon contains the quadrangle, et cetera, and each figure surpasses by a degree the one which precedes it. Thus the soul of the animal has the same power as the one of the plant, as well as a supplementary

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<sup>16</sup> Summa Theologica, I, q. 76, a. 1.

ALSO

Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. 68: And above all these forms we find a form like the higher substances even as regards the kind of knowledge, which is intelligence: and thus it is capable of an operation which is accomplished without any corporeal organ at all. This is the intellective soul, for intelligence is not effected by a corporeal organ. Consequently it follows that this principle whereby man understands, namely the intellective soul, which surpasses the condition of corporeal matter, is not wholly encompassed by and merged in matter, as are other material forms....

one. The soul of man has the same virtues as the one of the animal, and of the plant and yet another superior power or virtue.

In this case what becomes of the spirituality of the soul, and of its independence of matter? The question must also be answered concerning the possibility of its uniting with matter, in order to become the form of that potential element, without being diminished. Either the soul is the form of the body, and is then not spiritual, or the soul is spiritual, and is not the form of the body. The soul, without ceasing to be spiritual, can impose itself on matter to the point of having matter unite with it, and be dominated by it, and thus, form only one composite being. It is a conquest accomplished by the soul.

In the case of man, then, there is a form endowed with intelligence, but destined to appropriate matter intimately enough, and to form with matter, one being only, one substance only, although that being, that substance, is composed of two elements. The human soul is the substantial form of the body, and of man. With matter, it is the fundamental principle of the human being, who is one and complex, at the same time.<sup>17</sup> However, that principle is spiritual in its essence, independent of matter in its foundation by which it subsists, as manifested in the human operations of thought and will.

In order to perform an act of intellection, the soul must depend on its sensory act, for which it needs a body. Manifestly, the operations of the

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<sup>17</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. 68: And yet since the human soul's act of intelligence needs powers, namely imagination and sense, which operate through corporeal organs, this by itself shows that the soul is naturally united to the body in order to complete the human species.

soul are twofold. On the one hand, they are incorporeal; on the other hand, they are linked to a material body. In both cases, however, it is always one and the same soul which operates. Although the soul is capable of an operation which transcends matter, and is therefore incorporeal, it acts with the body, and consequently also in union with matter. It follows, that its essence is not the one of a pure spirit, but that of a spiritual substance which has a natural aptitude to incorporate. That does not mean that the soul has two natures, but it means that it is of an intermediary nature. Thus, the soul of man is on the boundary of two worlds, the world of spirits and the world of bodies, and that constitutes its degree of perfection.<sup>18</sup>

The intellectual soul is therefore the only substantial form in man. That intellectual soul is principle of the operations of nutrition and sensation as well as those of intellection, as it virtually contains all the forms

<sup>18</sup> Quaes. Disp. de Anima, art. 1, Marietti, p. 369, col. 2.

ALSO

Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. LXVIII

Summa Theologica, I, q. 77, a. 2; I, q. 76, a. 1; and

Summa Theologica, I, q. 98, a.1: ...We must, therefore, observe that man, by his nature, is established, as it were, midway between corruptible and incorruptible creatures, his soul being naturally incorruptible, while his body is naturally corruptible...

Therefore, since in things corruptible none is everlasting and permanent except the species, it follows that the chief purpose of nature is the good of the species; for the preservation of which natural generation is ordained. On the other hand, incorruptible substances survive, not only in the species, but also in the individual; wherefore even the individuals are included in the chief purpose of nature.

Hence it belongs to man to beget offspring, on the part of the naturally corruptible body. But on the part of the soul, which is incorruptible, it is fitting that the multitude of individuals should be the direct purpose of nature, or rather of the Author of nature, Who alone is the Creator of the human soul. Wherefore, to provide for the multiplication of the human race, He established the begetting of offspring even in the state of innocence.

inferior to the one of intellection. It is that soul, which is capable of all the operations of life, which is united directly, without intermediary, to matter, in order to form man. Because unity of being requires one substantial form, the substantial form of the human being is the soul of man, necessarily, simultaneously, the principle of vegetative life, of sensitive life and of intellectual operations.<sup>19</sup>

If the form of the subject, and its operations must be proportionate to the form of the object, it might be objected that the universal, as object of thought, would require a universal thinking subject, and that, as a consequence, the intellect by which man thinks is universal, that is to say, unique for all men, the same one for all, and not an individual faculty of each human person.

The difficulty is solved by the following distinction. It is not the individuality but it is the materiality which is the obstacle to the intellectual operation.<sup>20</sup> Saint Thomas says that it is impossible for one intellect

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<sup>19</sup>Summa Theologica, q. 76, a. 4: There is no other substantial form in man besides the intellectual soul; and that the soul, as it virtually contains the sensitive and nutritive souls, so does it virtually contain all inferior forms, and itself alone does whatever the imperfect forms do in other things. The same is to be said of the sensitive soul in brute animals, and of the nutritive soul in plants, and universally of all more perfect forms with regard to the imperfect.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., I, q. 76, a. 2, rep. obj. 3: Individuality of the intelligent being or of the species whereby it understands, does not exclude the understanding of universals; otherwise, since separate intellects are subsistent substances, and consequently individual, they could not understand universals. But the materiality of the knower, and of the species whereby it knows, impedes the knowledge of the universal. For as every action is according to the mode of the form by which the agent acts, as heating is according to the mode of the heat; so knowledge is according to the mode of the species by which the knower knows. Now it is clear that common nature becomes distinct and multiplied by reason of the individuating principles which come from the matter. Therefore, if the form, which is the means of knowledge, is material--that is, not abstracted from material conditions--its likeness to the nature of a

to belong to all men, according to the explanation of any of his predecessors except Aristotle whom he follows.<sup>21</sup> He shows the commentators of Aristotle to have been incorrect in their interpretations of that Philosopher. Saint Thomas asserts "...that the intellect which is the principle of intellectual operation is the form of the human body." Therefore it must be maintained that the individuality of the intellect is not a hindrance to the knowledge of the universal.

The absolute essence susceptible of universality is, in that respect, called universal, and is not only a thing thought as true by the intellect, but also loved as good by the will. It is first toward the absolute good that the will is inclined by its very nature. Then, that good is willed as

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species or genus will be according to the distinction and multiplication of that nature by means of individuating principles, so that knowledge of the nature of a thing in general will be impossible; but if the species be abstracted from the conditions of individual matter, there will be a likeness of the nature without those things which make it distinct and multiplied; thus there will be knowledge of the universal. Nor does it matter, as to this particular point, whether there be one intellect or many; because, even if there were but one, it would necessarily be an individual intellect, and the species whereby it understands, an individual species.

ALSO

Disp. de Anima Art. 2, ad. 6, p. 376, col. 1, upper half: ...(that) the intellect gives universality to understood forms--abstracts them from material individuating principles; whence it is not fitting that the intellect be universal, but that it be immaterial.

<sup>21</sup>Summa Theologica, q. 76, a. 2, body: It is impossible for one intellect to belong to all men. This is clear if, as Plato maintained, man is the intellect itself. For it would follow that Socrates and Plato are one man, and that they are not distinct from each other, except by something outside the essence of each. The distinction between Socrates and Plato would be no other than that of one man, with a tunic, and another with a cloak; which is quite absurd.

universal--as the proper object of its nature. The will has a tendency toward the perfect good in se. That good is loved, as the ideal toward which move the realizations of goods, which are in particular things. The human will aspires to that ideal. To unite with it, would constitute its complete satisfaction, its perfect happiness. Such is the sublimity of the human soul. Man aims at perfecting himself in the possession of the integral good in se: the infinite good is his ultimate end.<sup>22</sup>

The human soul, then, is simple in its essence, but is able to be. In its existence, there may be distinguished potency and act, but not matter and form. It is the form of the human body. At the same time that it is form, it is also the principle of intellection. It has an operation which completely transcends matter. It is immaterial, incorporeal, subsistent per se, and therefore, incorruptible, by its very nature. Its imperishability follows from its incorruptibility.

Its proper end is the understanding of the most perfect intelligible, God, Who is also its first beginning, by being its Creator. The specific principle of man, the soul which animates him, is a form which surpasses all the forms of other corporeal beings. We know that man has a nobler form, from his operation of intellection, which operation is accomplished without a corporeal organ. By this principle, man understands. Since his understanding is an operation carried on without a corporeal organ, he surpasses all inferior beings, by the possession of this form which is an intellectual principle

<sup>22</sup> Summa Theologica, I, q. 77, a. 2: ...Man can acquire universal and perfect goodness, because he can acquire beatitude. Yet he is in the last degree, according to his nature, of those to whom beatitude is possible.

transcending corporeal matter. Those prerogatives of the intellect cannot belong to potencies depending on matter, nor to a soul which depends on corporeal matter. Matter, being that from which something is made, individuates what is made with it. The form, in se, is universal as the principle of species, but if matter is made actual by a form, then that form belongs to it individually. Therefore, that by which a man acts, as man, is independent of matter. It follows that the human is essentially spiritual, subsisting in se.

The intellect of man knows all things, under a universal, immaterial, and necessary form. It derives that manner of knowing, from its proper nature, without requiring for such, that the external objects of knowledge be immaterial. Universality and necessity are the natural forms of the concepts of the judgments, and of the reasonings of man's intellect, and also of the desiderative acts, principally expressed by his will. But the truly universal object of the intellectual faculties must not be confused with other objects of knowledge which have not the same value. The true universal is a nature conceived first with a characteristic, not relative to such and such a subject, but absolute, without as yet, application to individuals. It is expressed by a definition, as--man is a rational animal. The comprehension of that nature is abstracted in observation, but by an act properly intellectual. It is comprehended at the very beginning as an absolute nature, whose definition is true, in se, independent of all individuality.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>De Ente et Essentia, Ch. IV, p. 40: Forms are not actual intelligibles except inasmuch as they are separated from matter and its conditions, nor are they made actual intelligibles except through the power of the intelligent substance inasmuch as they are received in it and are acted upon by it. And so it is necessary that in any intelligent substance there be complete immunity from matter so that those substances neither have matter as a part of themselves nor be as a form impressed in matter as is the case in regard to

Man alone, of all material beings, possesses intelligence; the spoken word is the expression of it. The development of language is the evident superiority of his nature. Intelligence has another characteristic, namely, liberty, which is the triumph of movement, by self. Indeed man determines himself to action. He aspires, naturally and necessarily, to happiness, but he chooses freely, with independence, the means of attaining that happiness. He does so with full knowledge of the cause and of the end. He determines the proximate end of his act, though his ultimate end is necessarily imposed upon him, he moves toward it, by means which he freely elects.<sup>24</sup>

material forms. Nor can anyone say that intelligibility is not hindered by matter in general, but only by corporeal matter. For if this came about by reason of corporeal matter only, since matter is not called corporeal except inasmuch as it stands under a corporeal form, then it would necessarily follow that matter would have this quality of hindering intelligibility in virtue of its corporeal form. And this cannot be, since even the corporeal form itself is actually intelligible, as are also the other forms, inasmuch as it is abstracted from matter. Therefore in the human soul, or in an intelligence, there is no composition of matter and form, justifying one in considering essence in them as it is considered in corporeal forms. But there is in them a composition of form and existence, and so it is said in the commentary on the ninth proposition of the Liber De Causis that an intelligence is a being having form and existence, and form is taken there from the essence itself, or the simple nature...

<sup>24</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 18, a. 3: Hence such animals as move themselves in respect to an end they themselves propose are superior... This can only be done by reason and intellect; whose province it is to know the proportion between the end and the means to that end, and duly coordinate them. Hence a more perfect degree of life is that of intelligent beings; for their power of self-movement is more perfect. This is shown by the fact that in one and the same man the intellectual faculty moves the sensitive powers; and these by their command move the organs of movement. Thus in the arts we see that the art of using a ship, i. e., the art of navigation, rules the art of ship-designing; and this in its turn rules the art that is only concerned with preparing the material for the ship. But although our intellect moves itself to some things, yet others are supplied by nature, as are first principles, which it cannot doubt; and the last end, which it cannot but will. Hence although with respect to some things it moves itself, yet with regard to other things it must be moved by another.



It is thus that the intelligence of man, through the vital energy of the soul moves human inclination by proposing to it, the object of the good. In its turn, the will puts in movement, the sensible appetite by using the sensible knowledge. Then the body obeys the sensible appetite under the directing motion of the will. It is clear, then, that both sensation and understanding are proper operations of man. The more perfect the object of an operation is, the more perfect is the operation. Consequently, understanding is the most perfect operation of man, because it is the object and end. Thus to know God by an act of the understanding is the proper object and ultimate end of man.<sup>25</sup>

Within the human soul, the form enters into a special category, the one of spirit, that is, principles, subsisting in themselves, independent of matter. The natural consequence is that the soul is incorporeal. At the death of man, it does not perish. It is separate from the body, and centered in its own existence. The human soul, at the same time that it is simple in its essence, is also, by its intellectual nature, in possession of a being which is properly its own.<sup>26</sup>

Extension is multiplicity of parts, each contiguous to the other. By their nature, those parts can be separated from one another. It is by means

<sup>25</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. III, Ch. 25: The operation proper to a thing is the end thereof: for it is its second perfection, so that when a thing is well conditioned for its proper operation it is said to be efficient and good. Now understanding is the proper operation of the intellectual substance: and consequently it is its end. Therefore whatever is most perfect in this operation is its last end, especially in those operations which are not directed to some product, such as understanding and sensation. And since operations of this kind take their objects, by which also they are known, it follows that the more perfect the object of any such operation, the more perfect is the operation. Consequently, to understand the most perfect intelligible,

of that separation that matter can receive various forms of substances. Form, as form, is always the same, but individuals having the same form are distinguished from one another by the quantitative divisibility of matter. In order to exercise its principle of intellection, the human soul must be unhindered by, and devoid of, corporeal extension. The soul of man retains within itself its intellectual and voluntary activity, because the body cannot participate in that. By that, the soul shows its independence and superiority. The soul of man thinks and wills, without material organs, not without brining, however, to its knowing, and to its willing, the extrinsic concourse of sensible operations, which have their organs in the human body. That is why the soul while it is the form of the body, subsists, nevertheless, in its proper being, which it communicates, in part only, to its matter.<sup>27</sup> Thus is completed the series of more and more glorious, victorious unions of forms to matter.

The human soul, the principle of intellection, is a principle both incorporeal and subsistent. Man, by means of the intellect, can have knowledge of bodies, and therefore, the soul is immaterial. Because the human soul, by the intellect, has an operation, per se, and apart from the body, it is subsistent. From its being incorporeal and subsistent, it follows that the human soul is incorruptible. A thing can be corrupted, per se, or accidentally, namely God, is the most perfect in the genus of this operation which is to understand. Therefore to know God by an act of intelligence is the last end of every intellectual substance.

<sup>26</sup> Summa Theologica, I. q. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., I, q. 76, a. 1.

ally. Only those things which derive their being by generation, lose it by corruption. But whatever has existence, per se, cannot acquit it or lose it, except per se, whereas nonsubsistent things, such as material forms and accidents, have existence or lose it, by generation or corruption of composite things. The human soul, being subsistent, cannot be corrupted, per se; that is impossible, because what belongs to a thing by virtue of itself is inseparable from it, and existence belongs to a form, which is an act, by virtue of itself. Matter acquires actual existence when it acquires a form, and is corrupted by the loss of its form. But it is impossible for a form to cease to exist. The human soul, therefore, cannot be corrupted, per se. Since, however, it is able to be, and to be made, its being is not rigorously necessary. God alone is absolutely necessary. Only God could withdraw the soul's being from it, but since it has been given a specific nature, that is, incorporeal and subsistent, it would not be compatible with God's wisdom to suppress its existence. Therefore, the human soul is not only incorporeal and subsistent, but also incorruptible.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., I, q. 75, a. 6: We must assert that the intellectual principle which we call the human soul is incorruptible. For a thing may be corrupted in two ways--per se and accidentally. Now it is impossible for any substance to be generated or corrupted accidentally, that is by the generation or corruption of something else. For generation and corruption belong to a thing, just as existence belongs to it, which is acquired by generation and lost by corruption. Therefore, whatever has existence per se cannot be generated or corrupted except per se; while things which do not subsist such as accidents and material forms, acquire existence or lose it through the generation or corruption of composite things. Now it was shown above (AA2,3), that the souls of brutes are not self-subsistent, whereas the human soul is; so that the souls of brutes are corrupted, when their bodies are corrupted, while the human soul could not be corrupted unless it were corrupted per se. This indeed, is impossible, not only as regards the human soul, but also as regards anything subsistent that is a form alone. For it is clear that what belongs to a thing by virtue of itself is inseparable from it; but existence belongs to a form which is an act, by virtue of itself. Wherefore matter acquires

From the soul's incorruptibility would follow its immortality. The mode of perfection of the soul is indicative of this immortality. Its principle of intellect develops by knowledge, and knowledge seeks the necessary and permanent. As to virtue, which is the perfection of the will, its work is the accomplishment of duty. Its highest degree of virtue is to be delighted in the love of God.

Another indication of the immortality of the soul is shown in the love of justice in man; a definitive injustice affects the soul as disorder, intolerable to eternal reason. This life, as is well known, is strewn with many injustices, which remain unpunished, as well as many just acts which go unrewarded. How can God's justice be maintained if everything ends at death? God does not owe anything to us, indubitably, but He owes it to His Wisdom to continue the life of the soul after death, in order to reward or punish it; that soul, which in its first life did not receive its sanction.<sup>29</sup>

The Goodness, as well as the Wisdom, of God, is interested in the conservation of the human soul. To annihilate it would be to contradict Himself, because it would be the annihilation of a nature, subsistent, in se. As a sign of the immortality of the soul, St. Thomas says that in things that have knowledge, desire follows from knowledge, and as the human intellect

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actual existence as it acquires the form; while it is corrupted so far as the form is separated from it. But it is impossible for a form to be separated from itself; and therefore it is impossible for a subsistent form to cease to exist...

<sup>29</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. IV, Ch. LXXIX, inter partes, 79: It was proved above that divine providence punishes evil-doers and rewards those who do well. Now, in this life man, who is composed of soul and body, either sins or lives aright. Therefore reward or punishment is due man in respect of his body and of his soul. But it is plain that in this life man cannot obtain the reward of ultimate felicity, as we have shown above.

can know existence absolutely, so also it desires to exist always. The animal soul is destined to die, because the senses can know things, only as here and now, and so, the sensitive appetite tends to enjoy only what takes place here and now. But the human soul is destined to live forever, because it is intelligent and needs immortality to satisfy itself.<sup>30</sup>

In order to show more clearly how the soul of man is, at the same time, the form of the body, and an intelligent substance, it will be well to look into its various operations. Since operation follows form, the operation of anything is indicative of the nature of its formal principle.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, whereas, the soul is simple in its essence, it is not simple, in its being, its existence, but has several powers or potencies which are capable of being further actualized, by second acts, or operations.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Summa Theologica, q. 75, art. 6: Moreover we may take a sign of this from the fact that everything naturally aspires to existence after its own manner. Now,...in things that have knowledge, desire ensues upon knowledge. The senses indeed do not know existence, except under the conditions of here and now, whereas the intellect apprehends existence absolutely and for all times, so that everything that has an intellect naturally desires always to exist. But a natural desire cannot be in vain. Therefore every intellectual substance is incorruptible.

<sup>31</sup>Quaes. Disp. de Anima, art. 9, ad. 1, p. 408, col. 2, upper half: (That the powers of the soul are qualities of it by which it operates(works); and therefore they lie (fall) as middle things between the soul and the body, according as the soul moves the body, not however according as it gives it (the body) being (existence)).

<sup>32</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 77, a. 2: Of necessity we must place several powers in the soul. To make this evident, we observe that, as the Philosopher says (De Coelo ii, 12), the lowest order of things cannot acquire perfect goodness, but they acquire a certain imperfect goodness, by few movements; and those which belong to a higher order acquire perfect goodness by few movements; and the highest perfection is found in those things which acquire perfect goodness without any movement whatever. Thus he is least of all disposed to health, who can only acquire imperfect health by means of a few remedies; better disposed is he who can acquire perfect health by means of many remedies; and better still, he who can by a few remedies; best of all is he who has

The soul, in its essence, is actualized, as soon as it has being. In that way, the soul is a first act, ordered to a second act, by the ministry of the potencies it possesses. Although actually existing, it does not always perform the acts of life. Its vital potencies are not always actualized by operation, but sometimes remain in potential form. It follows that the potencies of the soul are natural emanations of the principle of life. It is by the intermediary of the potencies that living beings receive from their souls the spontaneous movement which characterizes them.

Aristotle expresses that idea in the following manner: "Whatever is in motion is moved by another". "Another must be other than the thing which is moved. St. Thomas says: "Therefore nothing is from the same point of view moving in act and moved, and hence nothing moves itself."

If nothing moves itself, per se, then, nothing is living, granting that to live is to move oneself. However, according to both Aristotle and St. Thomas, there are living beings, and life consists in the capacity of giving oneself movement or operation. The explanation of this paradox is that there can be some beings, in which the mover and the moved co-exist: in which one part of the subject moves another part of the same subject. That suffices

perfect health without any remedies. We conclude, therefore, that things which are below man acquire a certain limited goodness; and so they have a few determinate operations and powers. But man can acquire universal and perfect goodness, because he can acquire beatitude. Yet he is in the last degree according to his nature, of those to whom beatitude is possible; therefore the human soul requires many and various operations and powers. But to angels a smaller variety of powers is sufficient. In God there is no power or action beyond His own Essence.

Yet there is another reason why the human soul abounds in a variety of powers--because it is on the confines of spiritual and corporeal creatures; and therefore the powers of both meet together in the soul.

for the safeguarding of the principle. As Aristotle has it: "In what moves itself, one element moves and another is moved."

The human soul, the most noble of souls, is, at the same time, strictly centered in its simple essence, since in its essential foundation, it is independent of all matter and the most prolific, in distinct and ordered potencies. Some are in the organs, namely, the potencies of vegetation and of sensibility. The others are in the soul, and not communicated to the organism, namely, the reason and the will. The essence of the soul is one, not divisible in parts, of which one would be incorporeal, and the other not. But its unity is the source of multiple potencies, some of which can be independent of the body, because the essence itself has a mode of incorporation, which does not hinder its radical independence. The essence communicates its actual being to the matter without ceasing to subsist in that being which belongs to it. Thus, the essence is the active principle and the end.<sup>33</sup>

But the essence is not the receptive subject of all those potencies. Some are received in the animated body and others in the soul alone. The essence is the subject, and at the same time, the principle of the latter, namely, the intellect and the will. The essence is the principle, but the living body is the subject of other potencies, vegetative and sensitive.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 77, a. 6, rep. obj. 2: The subject is both the final cause and in a way the active cause of its proper accident. It is also as it were the material cause, inasmuch as it is receptive of the accident. From this we may gather the essence of the soul is the cause of all its powers as their end and as their active principle; and of some as receptive thereof.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., I, q. 77, a. 5: It is clear from what we have said above that some operations of the soul are performed without a corporeal organ, as understanding and will. Hence the powers of these operations are in the soul as their subject. But some operations of the soul are performed by means of corporeal organs...have their subject in the composite, and not in the soul alone.

That is not due to an impotency of the soul, but to the incapacity of matter. The soul remains in the body all that it is in itself, and all that it is, it would share with the body, if the body could receive all. It ennobles the body, as much as the nature of the body can be ennobled. It reserves to itself alone what the corporeal cannot assume. Therefore, thought and will are not more immaterial than the essence of the soul. On the contrary, they get their immateriality from the very immateriality of that essence. In short, the essence of the soul is not made up of two partial elements, one by which the body is formed, and the other from which its intellectual potencies emanate. Its essence is absolutely simple in reality, although it can be considered from different points of view. The soul is subsisting in itself. It communicates its actuality to the corporeal matter, without losing its intrinsic capacity of operating alone, independently of the organism. In its communication with matter, the soul remains subsisting. It is the very being in which it subsists, that it communicates to the body, and it is precisely because the soul is subsisting that it is a principle of intellection and of volition. Therefore, the very being that the soul communicates remains, in spite of that communication, the actual principle of intellectual life.<sup>35</sup>

The human soul plays the role of the sensitive and vegetative soul at the same time as the one of intellectual soul. Therefore, the soul must perform

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., I, q. 76, a. 8, rep. obj. 4: Some of the powers of the soul are in it according as it exceeds the entire capacity of the body, namely the intellect and the will; whence these powers are not said to be in any part of the body. Other powers are common to the soul and body; wherefore each of these powers need not be wherever the soul is, but only in that part of the body, which is adapted to the operation of such a power.



with the body, everything that pertains to sensibility and vegetation; and for that, it must awaken in the corporeal substance, the potencies appropriated to such operations. These potencies are in the body, by virtual contact. By that means, the soul extends them in the regions of the organisms which are suited to them. St. Thomas compares the existence of those potencies in the body to the modes of existence which a pure spirit might have, in a corporeal thing: as God is in all things, because He acts in all things; in like manner, the soul is, by its potencies, in the organism. The human soul contains its body, rather than is contained in it. It can, without dividing or assuming dimensions, insinuate its potencies in the body. It forms the body by communicating its very being to the matter. It constitutes it in actual substance with all the properties suitable to its species of human body.<sup>36</sup>

Those potencies have a distinct reality, although they are dependent on, and emanate from, the source whence life comes. Indeed to act is a consequence of to be. Nevertheless, being and acting are not the same thing, since it is possible to be, without acting, actually. Therefore, action is an accidental, hence a distinct, addition. In God alone the Substance acts by its very Essence, which makes it what it is. In God there cannot be any potentiality, because in Him there cannot be any addition or complement. Being Pure Act, He has at once and immediately, without becoming, all that He can be.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., III, q. 8, a. 2: The human body has a natural relation to the rational soul, which is its proper form and motor. Inasmuch as the soul is its form, it receives from the soul life and the other properties which belong specifically to man; but inasmuch as the soul is its motor, the body serves the soul instrumentally.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., I, q. 77, a.1: ...The operation of the soul is not in the genus of substance; for this belongs to God alone, whose operation is His own substance. Wherefore the Divine power which is the principle of his operation is

As to the reasonable soul, it needs more eminent potencies: a faculty to elevate to the abstract and universal the data furnished by the sense--to judge; and a faculty which tends toward the end as good, as presented by the judgment--to will. Hence, the soul has the power of universal thought, as well as the power of affection for the highest good, that is, an intellect and a free will.<sup>38</sup>

The soul effects the movement, as well as the change, of a body already animated by it--hence movement of operation. As to the intellect and the will, they are not localized in any organs. Therefore, the whole human soul is in the organism, only by its faculties of vegetation and sensation. The intelligence and the will are in the soul as their subject, because it is by them that the soul operates. In the animal and the plant, the sensitive and vegetative operations are accomplished by the animated body. Man, who, by his nature, comprises the natures of the plant and the one of the animal,

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the Divine Essence itself. This cannot be true either of the soul, or of any creature...This may be also shown to be impossible in the soul. For the soul by its very essence is an act. Therefore if the very essence of the soul were the immediate principle of operation, whatever has a soul would always have actual vital actions, as that which has a soul is always an actually living thing.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., q. 83, a. 1: Man has free will: otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would be in vain. In order to make this evident, we must observe that some things act without judgment...But man acts from judgment, because by his apprehensive power he judges that something should be avoided or sought. But because this judgment, in the case of some particular act, is not from a natural instinct, but from some act of comparison in the reason, therefore he acts from free judgment and retains the power of being inclined to various things. For reason in contingent matters may follow opposite courses, as we see in dialectics, syllogisms and rhetorical arguments. Now particular operations are contingent, and therefore in such matters the judgement of reason may follow opposite courses, and is not determinate to one. And forasmuch as man is rational it is necessary that man have a free will.

must also perform the actions of the inferior principles of life. It follows that in man, to grow and to feel, are operations of the body, by the soul, that is, by the potencies, which the soul gives to the body.

The potencies of operation of the substantial forms are not necessarily in the entire body, nor in each part of the body, because a principle may exist somewhere without producing all its natural consequences.

Thus, having formed the body, the soul puts it in movement, for the operations of life at its various degrees.

The human soul sets a definite order in its diverse operations; it also orders the functioning of the instruments, which it uses. As a consequence, the soul is the principle of movement and of action in the human body, but its motion is communicated under different forms, by the motions which the parts of the body exercise upon one another.

Souls are essentially equal but the powers of the intellectual order are proportioned to the disposition of the living and feeling body, which individualized the soul. Likewise, in the total series of animated beings, bodies specifically more perfect naturally, have souls of better species. Likewise, in individual formations, a better prepared organism is receptive of a more vigorous soul, even as to its incorporeal powers. It is an application of the law of harmony which regulates all the relations of nature.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., q. 77, art. 4: Since the soul is one, and powers are many, and since a number of things that proceed from one must proceed in a certain order, there must be some order among the powers of the soul. Accordingly we may observe a triple order among them, two of which correspond to the dependence of one power on another; while the third is taken from the order of the object. Now the dependence of one power on another can be taken in two ways: according to the order of nature, forasmuch as perfect things are by their nature prior to imperfect things; and according to the order of generation and time; forasmuch as from being imperfect, a thing comes to be perfect. Thus,

We may say, that in the natural order, everything is harmonious. Therefore, there are required proportions between the preliminary dispositions of the matter, and the forms which perfect it.

The soul can exist alone, but that separate existence is not the one that is naturally suited to it. Its normal mode of being is to exist in a body. If the soul were a pure spirit, made to live outside of matter, it would have in its very being, the principle of its individuality. It would be individual by the simple actuality of its nature.

By themselves, souls are similar, because the species is one. They could not be distinguished from one another, by their substance, if each one of them were not appropriated to a portion of matter. Each soul is adapted to each body.

Individuality is a characteristic that the being of the soul assumes, without its essence being altered. Once individualized, the soul does not cease to be spiritual, nor independent of matter. The singularity which the soul acquires fixes its nature, but does not change it.<sup>40</sup>

according to the first kind of order among the power, the intellectual powers are prior to the sensitive powers; wherefore they direct them and command them. Likewise the sensitive powers are prior in this order to the powers of the nutritive soul. In the second kind of order, it is the other way about. For the powers of the nutritive soul are prior by way of generation to the powers of the sensitive soul; for which, therefore, they prepare the body. The same is to be said of the sensitive powers with regard to the intellectual. But in the third kind of order, certain sensitive powers are ordered among themselves, namely, sight, hearing, and smelling. For the visible naturally comes first; since it is common to higher and lower bodies; but sound is audible in the air, which is naturally prior to the mingling of elements, of which smell is the result.

<sup>40</sup>Contra Gentiles, Ck. II, Ch. 81: For it is not every difference of forms that causes a difference of species, but only that which is in respect of formal principles, or of a different kind of form; since it is clear that the form is essentially distinct in this and that fire, and yet neither fire nor form is specifically different. Accordingly multitude of soul separated

"A complete individual substance, intellectual in nature and master of its actions" is a person. A person is an individual, having the use of reason. Every man is an individual, a part, as is every other thing, of the material universe; he is a person inasmuch as he is centered in himself, autonomous, and free to pursue his own freely chosen course of action. Any material thing is an individual, because it is a part of matter, and is undivided in itself and divided from other things, but a person is a special kind of an individual, one having the use of reason, and therefore, spiritual. St. Thomas says that the word "person" signifies what is the most perfect

in all nature: *Persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura*<sup>41</sup> from their bodies results from the substantial distinction of forms, since one soul is substantially distinct from another; and yet this distinction does not result from a distinction in the essential principles of the soul, nor from a different kind of soul, but from the various co-aptation of souls to bodies, because this soul is adapted to this and not to that body, and that soul to another body, and so on. And this co-aptation remains in the soul even after the body has perished, even as the soul's substance remains through being independent of the body in the point of being. For the soul according to its substance is the form of the body, else it would be united to the body accidentally, and consequently the union of body and soul would result in one thing not essentially but accidentally. Now it is as forms that souls need to be adapted to their bodies. Therefore it is clear that these same various co-aptations remain in separated souls, and consequently the plurality of souls remains also.

<sup>41</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 29, a.3: Person signifies what is most perfect in all nature.

Ibid., a. 4: ...For person in general signifies the individual substance of a rational nature. The individual in itself is undivided, but is distinct from others. Therefore person in any nature signifies what is distinct in that nature: thus in human nature it signifies this flesh, these bones, and this soul, which are the individuating principles of a man, and which though not belonging to person in general, nevertheless do belong to the meaning of a particular human person.

The soul's being the first act of an organized body, one might object that a certain beginning of organization is needed in the corporeal matter for it to be susceptible of having a soul. Therefore, a certain progress effected in the organism would be necessary for a sensible soul to find it suitable to localize itself in a body, and a more advanced progress also would be necessary for an intelligent soul to become incarnate in a body.

The development of the embryonic life is an image of the general evolution of nature. We see therein the tendency of matter to substantiate itself by the acquisition of more and more noble forms.

The generation of man offers the same phenomenon as the one of the animal. For man also, the vegetative life precedes and prepares for, the sensitive life. The vegetative soul appears before the animal soul and is subsumed by the latter. At a certain moment the soul of man subsumes it and remains the only soul of the infant. The progress of generation requires the human soul appear but, necessarily, it is God Who creates it.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Summa Theologica, I. q. 118, a. 2, rep. obj. 2: Some say that the vital functions observed in the embryo are not from its soul, but from the soul of the mother; or from the formative power of the semen. Both of these explanations are false; for vital functions such as feeling, nourishment and growth cannot be from an extrinsic principle. Consequently, it must be said that the soul is in the embryo; the nutritive soul from the beginning, then the sensitive, lastly the intellectual soul.

Therefore some say that in addition to the vegetative soul which existed first, another, namely the sensitive, soul supervenes; and in addition to this again another, namely the intellectual soul. Thus there would be in man three souls of which one would be in potentiality to another. This has been disproved above. (Q LXXVI A 3) ...We must therefore say that since the generation of one thing is the corruption of another, it follows of necessity that both in men and other animals, when a more perfect form supervenes the previous form is corrupted: yet so that the supervening form contains the perfection of the previous form and something in addition. It is in this way that through many generations and corruptions we arrive at the ultimate substantial form, both in man and other animals. This indeed is apparent to the senses in animals generated from putrefaction. We conclude therefore

It is according to a natural law that the creation of the soul is solicited by an organism suitably prepared. This enough for the child to be the son of his father and his mother. But the principle of life in that generation is too immaterial for a corporeal evolution to produce it; the intervention of God is necessary. In submitting to the appeal of Nature, God obeys only Himself; since it is He Who has made the law, to which He submits Himself, and as He governs all, even the natural forces, we can say that it is He, Who conducts the course of generation to the point where creation is necessary to complete the work.<sup>43</sup>

The development of the inferior energies of man are thus established, before the appearance of the intellectual soul. This soul takes possession of the edifice already started, completes, and crowns it. When the soul is present it performs all the actions of man, those of the body: namely, the powers of vegetation, those of sensibility, as also those of the intellect and the will.<sup>44</sup>

The souls of the parents which are also spiritual substances are not sufficient to operate the spiritual generation of a human soul. What is to be produced is a subsisting soul. As there is nothing external from which it can be made, and as it cannot be detached from the souls of the parents

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that the intellectual soul is created by God at the end of human generation and this soul is at the same time sensitive and nutritive, the pre-existing forms being corrupted.

<sup>43</sup>Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Chap. LXXXIX: It remains clear then that the formation of the body, especially as regards the foremost and principal parts is not from the form of the subject generated, nor from a formative power acting by virtue of that form, but from (a formative power) acting by virtue of the generative soul of the father, the work of which soul is to produce the specific like of the generator.

<sup>44</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 90, a. 2.

(because immaterial things cannot be divided into parts), it is necessary that it be created, ex nihilo. God alone can create.<sup>45</sup> It follows, therefore, that it is God Who intervenes in order than a human soul come into existence.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, neither the intellect nor the will comes directly from the parents, since neither can be produced by corporeal generation. They must be brought integrally by the soul which comes from God. However, by a natural harmonious agreement, they may assume in the child an hereditary measure and bear the mark of his generators as to what constitutes his individuality. Such a spiritual nature as the human soul must have an origin

<sup>45</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 118, a. 2: It is impossible for an active power existing in matter to extend its action to the production of an immaterial effect. Now it is manifest that the intellectual principle in man transcends matter; for it has an operation in which the body takes no part whatever. It is therefore impossible for the seminal power to produce the intelligent principle.

Again, the seminal power acts by virtue of the soul of the begetter, according as the soul of the begetter is the act of the body, making use of the body in its operations. Now the body has nothing whatever to do in the operation of the intellect. Therefore the power of the intellectual principle, as the intellectual, cannot reach to the semen. Hence the Philosopher says (*De Gener. Animal.* ii, 3): It follows that the intellect alone comes from without.

Again, since the intellectual soul has an operation independent of the body, it is subsistent...therefore to be and to be made are proper to it. Moreover, since it is an immaterial substance it cannot be caused through generation, but only through creation by God. Therefore to hold that the intellectual soul is caused by the begetter is nothing else than to hold the soul to be non-subsistent, and consequently to perish with the body. It is therefore heretical to say that the intellectual soul is transmitted with the semen.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., I, q. 90, a. 3: ...God alone can create; for the first agent alone can act without presupposing the existence of anything; while the second cause always presupposes something derived from the first cause...and every agent that presupposes something to its act, acts by making a change therein. Therefore everything else acts by producing a change, whereas God alone acts by creation. Since, therefore, the rational soul cannot be produced by a change in matter, it cannot be produced, save immediately by God.



worthy of it. In the human soul there is no matter. It cannot come to existence, as a part of a composite by a simple movement of corporeal generation. It becomes necessary, then, for a spiritual power to intervene.<sup>47</sup>

God does not create a bodiless soul which later becomes incarnate. The soul is created for the body, at the very moment in which it is incorporated, when the matter is suitably disposed.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Summa Theologica, I, q. 90, a. 2.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., I, q. 118, a. 3: ...If it were accidental to the soul to be united to the body, it would follow that man who results from this union is a being by accident; or that the soul is a man, which is false...Man understands through receiving from the senses, and turning to phantasms...For this reason the soul needs to be united to the body, which is necessary to it for the operation of the sensitive part...

...If it is natural to the soul to be united to the body, it is unnatural to it to be without a body, and as long as it is without a body it is deprived of its natural perfection. Now it was not fitting that God should begin His work with things imperfect and unnatural, for He did not make man without a hand or a foot, which are natural parts of a man. Much less, therefore, did He make the soul without the body.

...Therefore...we must simply confess that souls were not created before bodies, but are created at the same time as they are infused into them.

#### ALSO

Contra Gentiles, Bk. II, Ch. 83: It is natural to every form to be united to its proper matter: else that which is made of form and matter would be something beside nature. Now that which is becoming to a thing according to nature is ascribed to it before that which is becoming thereto beside nature: since what becomes a thing beside nature is in that thing accidentally, whereas what is becoming to it according to nature is in it per se; and that which is accidental always comes after that which is per se. Therefore it is becoming to the soul to be united to the body before being separated from the body. Therefore it was not created before the body to which it is united.

...The soul is united to the body, immediately...

This specific principle of man, then, comes directly from above. The human soul, because of its intellective nature, is made by creation. This is not the case with other forms. From its manner of operations, we know the mode of existence of the human soul. We know that its manner of operation surpasses those of corporeal, vegetative, and sensitive beings. We know, therefore, that the rational soul is a subsistent form because it has an operation, per se, apart from the body. Nothing operates except as much as it is actual. The human soul can know the forms of corporeal things, and in so knowing, it is incorporeal, that is, it is subsistent. As a subsistent form, it properly belongs to it to be, and to be made. Because it cannot be made of pre-existing matter, it must be made by way of creation, which is the proper act of God.

Such is the nature of man. He is corporal and spiritual, a body united to a spiritual soul. Because the human soul is immaterial, and because it is subsistent, and has existence, per se, it is incorruptible. Existence belongs to the human soul by virtue of itself, and is inseparable from it, because it is impossible for a form to be separated from itself, not being composed of parts. Therefore it is impossible for the human soul, a subsistent form, to be corrupted. This we call immortal. It is this soul of man which is the unique principle whence is derived all life: vegetative, sensitive, and intellective.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Many of the writings of St. Thomas deal with man, his nature, his faculties. He teaches that the body of the first man was "formed immediately" by God; and that man has received from the Creator, as his substantial and unique form, a rational soul. That form extends its influence to all the parts of the being. Finally, that same formal principle requires dispositions proportioned to its rank and its functions. That helps us to understand how man, in whom is reflected the image of God, is essentially distinct from the irrational animals. In these, according to the degree of perfection they enjoy, appear not images, more or less distant vestiges of Divinity.

Those vestiges present the instincts to us, linked to what the Philosopher calls the estimative faculty. But between the animal, however perfect it may be, and man, exists a profound gap, which the most advanced scientific theories cannot bridge: an intellectual substance, at the same time corporeal, the human being forms a composite wherein the instinct yields inevitably to reason. By this is seen the exultation of man, the foundation of his elevated life, of his prerogatives and of his liberty. It is from this that man has his principal title of nobility, and the basis of his true eminence. The image of God in man makes of the human soul a spiritual and immortal principle. It confers upon this favored being of the Creator, faculties which place him on a plane absolutely superior to that of the sensible world.

The senses know only the singular, the concrete, the particular, as submerged in individuating matter. Capable of abstract notions, the intellect soars to the universal. With the eyes of the body, we see trees laden with flowers and fruit. With the eyes of the mind, we encompass in a glance all nature; and admire its beauty, its order and its harmony.

That is what attests to our superiority. There is, especially among some well endowed men, a yearning for generalization, a profound need of throwing off the yoke of facts, which enslave them by their contingencies. The intellectual force of man is measured by its power of universalization.

Saint Thomas establishes that purely spiritual creatures possess a degree of knowledge, the more perfect--as the intelligible species by which their cognitive faculty is exercised--according as they possess a more general, representative power. And in the order of human intellects he uses this example; some weak, others strong, according as their sight suffers the limits of a more restricted environment, or comes from more elevated position from which they are thus apt to radiate, on a greater number of objects. The mind, capable of ascending to spheres more liberated from the conditions of matter, assimilates all the power and wealth of truth which those spheres, freed from the grosser world, contain.

Such is the universal notion of human nature and the applications which it comports. If we would maintain, re-establish or consolidate peace among the diverse social classes, by the victory of the fundamental virtues of justice, and of charity, we invoke at once the rights of the human person. It is to human nature, to human activities, to human fraternity,

that we must appeal.

The universal, which solicits the human mind, falls back on it, in beneficial enlightenment. The principles deriving from it are both knots of security and anchors of certitude. According to St. Thomas, their role, either in the realm of fact, or in the order of knowledge, is of cardinal importance. That attachment to the principles is a protection from the danger of blindly following the waves and caprices of style and fashion. That characteristic of the human soul dignifies it and inspires in it esteem and confidence.

Man is made to the image of God. Rectitude is a necessary attribute of divinity. With man, that perfection comes from certain natural dispositions, reflected in the attitudes which are perfected by education and grace.

For example, righteousness of conscience, is the sense of justice, of equity, of fidelity, which every one loves and admires, and which appears to us as one of the most beautiful flowers of the human soul. The quality of right conscience is a solid guaranty of order, of moral and social. It reaches the virtue of justice in its most necessary and most profound applications. It disposes the human soul to render to God what is due Him, and to one's neighbor what his right demands.

The preponderant influence of reason constitutes one of the most exalted privileges of man. In the domain of economic things, by subject matter to man, and not man to matter, it affirms the pre-eminence of the spiritual forces, and the sovereignty of man, king of creation.

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